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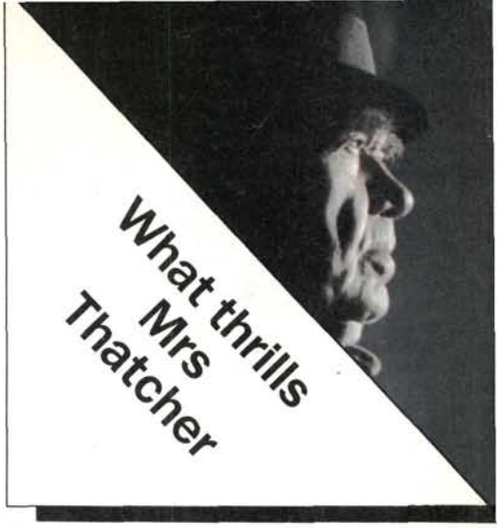

What thrills Mrs Thatcher

ABORTION

IS DAVID ALTON RIGHT?

62% of women are with him

Cover photo: Camera Press

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HAPPY NEW YEAR?

To all home owners . . . in the last twelve months the value of your property may have increased by as much as 26.7%![1] There may be a chill outside but inside you can take cheer and look forward to another twelve months in which your home will provide comfort, security and a sound investment for the future.

Now try and imagine what it would be like not to have a home at all.

Would you be happy?

- sleeping on a different friend's floor every night
- being harassed by your landlord
- sharing a toilet with twelve strangers
- sleeping out

2,000,000 single people are in this situation[2]

2,000,000 personal tragedies

One national disaster. If New Year greetings are to mean anything at all isn't it time we got our priorities right?

[1] Third Quarter 1987 c.f. Third Quarter 1986, East Anglian region *Halifax Building Society Index.*

[2] 1985 Physical and Social Survey of Houses in Multiple Occupation in England and Wales (HMSO January 1987)

CHAR – a voice that needs to be heard

CHAR speaks for the two million and more single homeless and badly housed people, who don't figure in housing legislation. The two million who face 1988 knowing that the situation – their situation – is going to get worse not better. Unless the rest of us make a New Year's resolution; to add our voice to CHARs demand that everybody should have a decent home.

Please help us to make that possible.

Here is a token of my New Year's resolution to support CHARs 1988 campaign for a decent home for everyone. NST-1

I enclose cheque/postal order for: £100☐ £50☐ £25☐ £10☐ £5☐

Please debit from my Access account £..... Signature .....

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☐ Please send me details of other ways of helping CHAR

Return this coupon to:
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Charity registration number: 268089

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 115 No 2964 15 January 1988

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How Europe bought an unused defence system from Reagan
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Labour's awkward squad

OF ONE THING you can be sure: John Prescott, David Warburton and Tony Benn have not conspired together to form Labour's awkward squad. But from quite different political positions they have in effect articulated the same concerns: the party's leaders are remote from their movement and are failing to give leadership at a time of a profound crisis — both of popularity and ideas — for the Labour Party. That "Steady as she goes" is not an appropriate command when the ship is sinking.

You can also be sure that, though they are the only ones so far to have broken ranks, they aren't alone; just because others on the right and left aren't making similar noises, it doesn't mean that they don't have similar thoughts.

Immediately after the last election, Neil Kinnock stated publicly: "The next election campaign begins now". That wasn't true; it was simply an injunction to his party to maintain the same self-discipline that it had largely showed in the run-up to June 1987. The "Labour Listens" campaign and policy reviews are now being pressed into service to the same end — to keep active members of the party quiet while crucial decisions are being made in their name. Indeed, the whole structure has been deliberately designed to exclude those members from taking part.

The party apparatus has also been made a great deal more authoritarian, and not only in the more obvious ways. It is outrageous enough that David Warburton should have been so comprehensively demoted for having the temerity to say what he thinks; equally outrageous has been the whispering campaign to blackguard Prescott and discredit his motives for considering standing against Roy Hattersley as deputy leader. These are the squalid tactics of Mrs Thatcher and her sidekick Bernard Ingham; they have no place in a democratic socialist party.

It's important to be sympathetic. These tendencies are obviously symptoms of a conservative institution on the defensive — scared for its very life, even. It's very hard to break out of outmoded ways of thinking and respond to new demands at a time of crisis, and it is not only the leadership which experiences this difficulty. But the dominance of the theory of "damage limitation" — and the consequent clampdown on internal debate — is itself profoundly damaging. The reality is that it stops the party from being open to fresh thinking even though it is apparently opening itself up to new ideas.

The fact is, however, that the "Labour Listens" programme is a largely cosmetic and carefully constructed exercise which is actually quite divorced from the policy reviews. These reviews are being conducted in isolation from the public, party activists and the expert party members who have previously contributed to policy-making — a sterile environment for new ideas.

It's hard to escape the suspicion that their role is to reconcile party policies with the results of private opinion polling and quietly to stun a few sacred cows, in preparation for their final slaughter. Neil Kinnock has indicated that he is ready to modify the most inconvenient of these beasts — the commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament — in an interview with Peter Jenkins (*Independent*, 16 November 1987).

If the election campaign really had begun — if it actually were 1991 — then the emphasis on discipline would be all very well. But the party has a breathing space which it should be using. The policy reviews should be publicly tied in with a real "Labour Listens" campaign which would put new ideas (and old: some of the old ideas are still relevant to people's needs and aspirations) to public forums and let people knock them about.

Here, of course, we come up against one of Labour's major problems. There are precious few signs of new thinking within the party, and certainly not from the three men who have incautiously raised their heads above the parapet. Each in their own way speaks for a backward-looking tradition in the party, with a certainty about what "socialism" means and how it might be brought about which doesn't have much resonance out there.

This, again, is a sign of a more general weakness. For a party which once proudly proclaimed that it had "soul", there is a curious vacuum where its ideological heart should be. The party's national executive recognised this weakness and ordered a hole-in-the-heart operation from Geoff Bish, the party policy-maker. For years, it is rumoured, a bulky package of ideas has been left to drift unfinished among the mess of papers on Bish's desk at Walworth Road.

What's certain is that the national executive has turned its back upon the whole enterprise; and wrongly so. For unless the party can renew its ideological purposes, it can't hope ever to get its policies and presentation right. If the last election proved nothing else, it surely proved that? But the party's new authoritarians are not simply blind to the need to restate first principles; they actively discourage well-meant proposals to do so. It really is time for thinking people to come to the aid of the party; and they should be actively encouraged to do so. Let a thousand flowers bloom; well, a few hundred anyway. We will plant a few in the *NS*. □

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DIARY

Hoardings on the London underground at the moment exhort us to take our holidays in Tunisia. Nothing odd about that, but the selling technique is remarkable. For rampant Eurocentricity I've seldom seen anything to match it. There is no word about ancient Carthage — nothing, indeed, about Tunisia's own history and culture at all. Instead, we are told that the country offers "the beaches of Greece", "the cuisine of France" (the ad proudly reveals that the country was a French colony; no matter that Tunisia has a perfectly good cuisine of its own), "the sport of Portugal" (illustrated with a photo of a golf course) "and the sophistication of Spain". Most impressive of all, the ad doesn't even mention that Tunisia is in Africa. Its location is identified merely as "Mediterranean". Why?

○

TV documentaries, radio series, books galore, Christmas supplements to the *NS* — few can resist the temptation to wallow in the 20th anniversary of the Year of the Barricades. But there is one conspicuous exception. Reviewing a history of '68, Paul Johnson parenthetically confesses that he recently looked up some of the articles he wrote at the time: "They make painful reading today. In the words of Clem Attlee, 'Best say no more about it'." Whereupon he changes the subject.

Come come, Paul, too modest by half. Readers of our Christmas issue have already tasted a morsel of Johnson's enthusiastic coverage of *les événements*; but I always feel one shouldn't miss an opportunity to rub his nose in it, so here's a bit more: "*Libérez nos camarades*! On Friday night, an inspired fever gripped 30,000 students gathered round the occupied buildings of the Sorbonne. Boys and girls, ripping out the paving stones with their bare hands, performed prodigious physical feats . . . Once again, the French have given birth to a new revolutionary spirit, which will ultimately enrich the lives of all of us."

And what does Paul have to say for himself now? "There is a strong case," he harrumphs, "for arguing that the sixties were the silliest decade of the century and 1968 the silliest year." And who, I wonder, was the silliest journalist?

○

I hear that the latest of John Birt's Young Things to be brought from London Weekend to the BBC is Dave Aaronovitch, who has been put in charge of *This Week Next Week*. His brief, I presume, is to make the programme as deadeningly bloodless as *Weekend World*, whence he comes. But what interests me is his background: not so many years ago Dave (known to enemies as "Son of Sam", because his father is indeed Sam Aaronovitch) was President of the National Union of Students, elected on a Broad Left ticket.

He is following a well-established tradition. Jack Straw, NUS President in That Year, is now a Labour front-bencher. Trevor Phillips, the first black President, is a senior figure at London Weekend Television and runs *The London Programme*. Sue Slipman, the first woman President, who was a Communist at the time, now spends her time washing David Owen's feet and touching the hem of his garment.

The NUS President in my own student days, Charles Clarke, is now Neil Kinnock's bodyguard. And his former deputy, Al Stewart, reads the news for ITN. I well remember Stewart's final student conference, when Clarke presented him with a hefty volume of Marx. "Thank you," Stewart replied. "This will ensure that I never practise revisionism." Perhaps that's what he now says to Sir Alistair Burnet after the microphones go off at the end of *News at Ten*; but somehow I doubt it.

○

As fast as the Communist Party of the Soviet Union sheds some of its less appetising habits, the Labour Party of Britain picks them up. A few weeks ago David Warburton, a senior figure in the GMB union, offered some reasoned criticism of Neil Kinnock's conduct as leader. He might have expected his arguments to be discussed and perhaps disagreed with, but he can hardly have anticipated what happened instead: Yeltsin-like, the poor sap has been relieved of most of his union offices and demoted to his old job by the union's general secretary, John Edmonds.

Kinnock and Edmonds don't *look* like graduates from the Mayor Daley school of boss politics. For that you need to be big and bum-faced (Jim Callaghan, Ernie Bevin), whereas Edmonds resembles a harassed, Pooterish commuter on the Petts Wood line and Kinnock — well, we all know what Neil looks like. Yet it seems that this pair can be as brutish as any of their more grim-visaged predecessors.

Which leaves me with one question: is there really any point in Walworth Road continuing to use the slogan "Labour Listens"? It was supposed to persuade us that the party was receptive to suggestions, but after the Warburton affair I find it has acquired a sinister alternative meaning. Watch out: Labour is listening to *you*. Careless talk costs jobs (as David Warburton learned too late). Mum's the word.

○

Similarly, while the Soviet CP is experimenting with multi-candidate elections, our own new model Labour Party is trying to stamp them out. I can't understand the hysterical reaction to the idea of John Prescott standing for the deputy leadership. Nobody thinks he stands any chance of winning, so why should even a committed disciple of Roy Hattersley (if such people exist) be troubled by the challenge? All the Labour establishment can say is that a contest would be "divisive", than which I can imagine no more fat-headed argument. If, in four years' time, the Prime Minister announces that she won't bother to call a general election because such polls are "divisive", can we expect to see Neil and Roy leading the applause? All elections are divisive: that's the point of them.

○

A friend who used to be a journalist but now writes novels renewed her car insurance the other day. Or rather, she tried to. She filled in the form and, with a hint of pride, for the first time gave her occupation as "novelist".

The insurance broker was on the phone forthwith. There was a problem, it seemed; could my friend tell her what sort of novels she wrote? ("Are they fiction or non-fiction?" was one ticklish question.) My friend asked why the firm need to know.

Ah well, came the reply, the company is nervous about insuring novelists — they're classified as a moral hazard. "Nothing against you personally," the broker added disarmingly. "You'd get the same thing if you were a croupier in a casino or an actress — they're moral hazards too."

What on earth did that mean? "It's simply the rules of companies underwritten by Lloyd's." So do P. D. James and Jeffrey Archer have trouble insuring their cars? "I don't know how they insure their cars," the broker huffed, beginning to lose patience, "but I'm sure they have a lot of trouble. I'm just trying to *help*. Now look: can you tell me how famous you're likely to be?" My friend said that she'd like to know that as well. But why did it matter?

Finally, after plenty of surreal meandering, the broker offered an explanation of sorts. If my friend became famous she would go to smart parties and mix with other well-known people; she might then give them a lift home in her car; and obviously the liability would be greater if she killed Jeffrey Archer than if she wasted any old person who wasn't famous. "So we need to know what sort of people you're likely to mix with. You see?" Of course.

Francis Wheen

ROGER WODDIS

Everything must go

Nicholas Ridley, the Environment Secretary, is reported to be drawing up secret plans to privatise Britain's National Nature Reserves

I wandered lonely as a cloud
  That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd
  Of vandals smashing daffodils,
And Ridley, most obsessed of these,
Was selling off the lakes and trees.

From Teesdale, where the air's like wine,
  To Wales and Scotland far away,
From Cambridge fen to Dorset chine,
  The purpose was to make them pay;
And Suffolk won't be worth a glance,
If Ridley's given half a chance.

The birds that fly above the bay,
  The rivers and the open sea,
How safe our heritage, if they
  Became a private company!
I gazed, and oh! what wealth, I thought,
If all of Nature could be bought!

Now oft, when on my couch I lie
  And watch the passing show reviewed,
I catch the gleam in Ridley's eye
  And wonder what he would exclude;
For naught his heart with pleasure fills
To match the ringing up of tills.

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BEN PIMLOTT

The logic of a deputy leader election, and why it shouldn't be followed

LIKE THE AMERICAN vice-presidency, Labour's deputy leadership isn't worth a barrel of spit. It carries no power, confers no honour, guarantees no job in a future Labour administration. So why all the fuss? The answer is that the 1981 battle of the titans, with its tantalisingly close result, bestowed upon the tinsel crown a deep symbolic importance which, in pre-electoral college days, it never possessed.

Symbols are powerful things, expecially in a movement that lives by tradition and precedent. It was the background of the Benn-Healey contest that gave rise to the 1983 Kinnock-Hattersley "dream ticket", on US presidential convention lines. The deputy leadership was brought into play to demonstrate the broad spread of support within the party for the new establishment. In those distant days Neil Kinnock was widely seen as an almost unequivocal left-winger, whose sole (though important) claim to non-left support was his resistance to Tony Benn. Only a small number of the hardest-of-hard left supported Eric Heffer's rival candidacy.

From Kinnock's point of view, the dream ticket has been a success. The partnership represents stability. Hattersley may not always be in tune with the rising generation of parliamentary newcomers, but he is felt publicly to have knowledge, courage and — in a Whitelaw sense — bottom. When people tink positively about Labour, they think of Kinnock-Hattersley, and (so the argument goes) the second half of the pantomime horse gives them a warm glow.

A challenge to the present deputy leader — even an unsuccessful one — will place a question mark over whether the dream ticket is still operational. The useful myth of the "soft left", with Kinnock as its champion, will be exposed.

Right and left have always been mysterious labels, more to do with people than with things. A checklist of policy statements over the past five years would not put Roy Hattersley and John Prescott, his putative challenger, far apart in the spectrum. Indeed there is a case (certainly on the basis of Hattersley's recent book *Choose Freedom*, Penguin £3.95) for regarding Hattersley as the more radical, and Prescott as more conservative.

That does not matter, in Labour Party terms. It is pedigree that counts — as Harold Wilson understood well when he won the leadership in 1963, rallying the left behind him. Pedigree places Hattersley on the right and Prescott on the left. Hitherto, pedigree has also put Prescott and Kinnock in the same camp.

WHEN DOES left become right? When it wins. Ever since Kinnock became leader he has had difficulty in maintaining, for party consumption, the image of his leftness. The success of the Tribune slate in last year's shadow cabinet elections made the illusion harder still to maintain. Leftness implies exclusion, rebellion, opposition. Once upon a time, Tribunites were scruffy people in duffle coats who went on marches. Nowadays they have short hair and wear City suits, and get praised by the leader-writers of the *Independent*. These are the coming men (and occasionally women) who will take the bulk of the senior and middling jobs if Labour again holds power.

Tribune, however, is not a homogeneous substance, and that is what the deputy contest will be about. For if the Prescott bandwagon begins to roll, it will separate comrade from comrade within the wide Tribune grouping. A possible outcome is a permanent split, with battle-lines drawn between pro- and anti-Prescott segments. Whether this happens or not, the contest is bound to be polarising. Prescott, indeed, has privately declared that this is his intention, forcing the movement as a whole to choose between left and right.

> ***Prescott's bid does not lack forethought. Personal antipathy may remove inhibitions, but there is a clear political opportunity as well. Whatever the final result, it is hard to see anything but advantage to the challenger***

People, in short, will have to stand up and be counted — which is something which flexible politicians hate more than anything else. If and when this occurs, the party leader, who has indicated his support for Hattersley, will be unable to avoid identification with the right. "Soft left" will finally dissolve into alternative consistencies, the loyalist and careerist elements within it becoming indistinguishable from the fast disintegrating old right.

Officially, of course, Prescott's challenge is about something quite different. It is about the job. Prescott proposes a new, compaigning role for the deputy post, which should be in close communion with the movement. Labour, he suggests, isn't getting its message across and needs somebody of his own talent and credentials to help it. There is little reason to doubt the seriousness of his plan. There is even less reason to see it as the main issue at stake. Not only is Frank Dobson, the present campaigns co-ordinator, good at his job. Until the policy review has deliberated, there won't be a clear message to put across. Moreover, since a vote for Prescott will be interpreted as a vote, not just against Hattersley, but against Kinnock's style of leadership as well, the possibility of the leader giving a new campaigning role to Prescott, however bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, may be discounted.

Yet Prescott's bid does not lack forethought. It would certainly be wrong to put it down to pique or jealousy. Personal antipathy may remove inhibitions, but there is a clear political opportunity as well. Whatever the final result, it is hard to see anything but advantage to the challenger.

IF PRESCOTT gets a derisory vote, there will be a temporary humiliation and a chorus of I-told-you-so's. But the leadership will be more relieved than angry. At the same time, Prescott will have enjoyed eight months of press and television interviews, which will establish him as the left's champion in the shadow cabinet. In the unlikely event of his winning, it will, of course, be a remarkable personal triumph, and he will have proved his point about the extent of dissatisfaction in the ranks.

The third possibility is that he does not win, but gives Hattersley an anxious summer. Such an outcome would be gratifying to a chastened left, and would be a useful marker for the future. Neil Kinnock is at present both healthy and politically secure. Should he, however, be knocked down by a bus, or suffer another bad election defeat and be persuaded to quit, the succession will be determined by the same electoral college that decides the deputy leadership.

Voting in the Labour movement is habit-forming, and the memory of supporting Prescott in the famous battle of '88 could provide a valuable starting block. Even before the invention of the college, to have been left-wing challenger in a previous deputy contest proved a useful qualification. Wilson was beaten by Brown in 1962 for the deputy post, before turning the tables on his rival the following year; and Michael Foot fought unsuccessfully for the deputy leadership three times, before taking it in 1976 and the leadership itself four years later.

Perhaps Prescott's mind does not work like that. Whatever the underlying reasons — and despite some real grounds for criticism of the way party affairs are conducted — the prospect is a sad and perilously familiar one. We can expect a bumper year for media carnivores, as each side feeds them titbits of slander and gossip. The policy review will be interpreted largely for its significance in the traditional game of push-me-pull-you. The unusual chance to highlight the Alliance as a bunch of quarrelsome prima donnas will be lost. Meanwhile, the possibility of a hard left candidacy raises the spectre of a competitive cacophany.

But perhaps we are being too pessimistic. Prescott has been wisely cautious in making a public announcement. He has delayed it until he meets his constituency general committee on 19 January. This will give him the chance to confound the press by announcing that, while continuing to urge the party to go on the offensive, he has decided in the interests of unity, and in response to the requests of his leader, not to stand. There are some who believe that he has the courage, and the unselfishness, to take it. □

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The best (that money can buy)

"WE HAVE THE BEST medical-attention system in the world," trumpeted the presidential hopeful George Bush to the *Washington Post* recently. He means the best that money can buy, added its columnist Richard Cohen. Using the infant mortality rate as a yardstick, the American health care system might as well be that of Bourkina Faso in some cities. In black districts of Washington DC, it is 24 infant deaths per thousand, for instance, compared with 11 for the US as a whole — the same as for the UK National Health Service that Bush was by implication attacking — and 10 per thousand in Spain, France, Germany and Canada. Yet it is still considered to be the world's most medically advanced system.

And of course it is, to the point where Stanford University has just issued guidelines about when to turn off life-support, a brand-new hormonal contraceptive minus visible side effects goes on the market in the 1990s, transplants are becoming workaday success stories, and drugs like Perconal are making fertility available to women who would otherwise be barren.

Only for the continuingly hideous Aids has the American health machine failed to find a product to put in its shop for consumers to buy. With this consumer-oriented attitude towards health care, it is taken for granted that enough money can buy a solution to pretty well anything. Yet instead, as the number of HIV-positives pushes upwards towards the million mark, state budgets like that of California are at breaking point from the strain of caring for Aids patients from the public purse at over $1,000 per day (sometimes six figures apiece, not counting the price of the American-developed drug AZT); and there are parents whose old-age piggybanks are busted as well as their aging hearts.

But paradoxically this is one more reason there are 37 million Americans who are not insured against health costs. To be covered by an insurance company in the US (Blue Cross or Blue Shield are among the oldest) you have to join a group scheme at work or present yourself for rigorous examination. That includes an Aids test — although in some jurisdictions, like the District of Columbia, representatives have ruled that mandatory Aids tests are unlawful for that purpose. You may have to travel many miles to get your coverage, and plenty of people are rejected for being too old or too risky, or for having pre-existing disorders. Medicare may take care of some but not all of the costs of the elderly; Medicaid takes care of the one in five children born below the poverty line. Both are relics of the socialised medicine brought in back in the '30s when people were also too broke to pay doctors. Historically this has engendered a complicated scene, with employers forking out resentfully and the Federal Government sponsoring up to 40 per cent.

Once accepted into a scheme, you may have to pay up to and beyond $200 per month: and the premium rises steeply for those over 65.

Make no mistake about it. Those 37 million who have decided to risk going without protective insurance are not the destitute, unemployed or geriatric, who can still generally find a public hospital to treat them for free without demanding a credit card first. These are self-employed, middle-class small business people: bookshop owners, bar owners, actors and publishers. My buddies, in short. The worst that could happen to him, says one, is for him to develop Alzheimer's disease or Aids: something very long and lingering that would require a low but constant level of maintenance. He is not worried for himself — he could simply declare bankruptcy and turn up his toes in the public hospital at the taxpayer's expense. But what if his poor old mom had to sell the house and her annuity and her Treasury Bonds?

That is the kind of nightmare you often hear about from Americans, who often in turn have heard about the horrors of the National Health from anti-welfare politicians but do not know about other European compromise solutions in socialised health plans. One friend has a colleague whose kidney transplant and dialysis has beggared his wife's family for generations. Another pal's brother went off the road in a truck and his family will never manage to pay off the hospital care. Another friend's baby nearly died, at the rate of $1,000 per day — and eventually the insurance paid back $300. Taking into account the tax deductibles, he is better off not having to pay the $200 per month he cannot in any case afford.

For increasing numbers of Americans, the answer is health maintenance organisations or HMOs. They are one-shop clinic systems where you are assigned all necessary treatments and the emphasis is on prevention, though you have no choice of specialist. Sometimes they cost as little as $75 a month, but there are still only 393 of these HMOs and you may not be lucky enough to live near one. And, under HMOs, the basic tenet of American life, the consumer's freedom of choice, is non-existent.

Senator Teddy Kennedy's Catastrophic Health and Illness Bill, all 200 pages of it, hits the committee stage in Congress this session with a thud. It will, if passed, help the elderly and the uninsured. The Bill will try to ensure that states pick up the tab for those unlucky enough to require a new kidney or neurosurgery.

But there is another thicket of problems inside the American health system, and that is the low morale of doctors and other medical personnel. In this overpopulated field few have the independence and income they think they deserve.

Elgy Gillespie

. . . and that money can't buy

ALL CARTOONISTS know that *really* ill hospital patients are attached to drip feeds. The government also knows this, which is why the two recent " injections" of money into the health service — £102m extra for this financial year and £700m for the next — are such insultingly small amounts. When the health authorities come back for more, as they'll have to, ministers will be able to point, Bumble-like, to the NHS's evident profligacy as proof of the need to privatise the whole system.

The £700 million will disappear into pay rises (£500m), Aids and breast cancer screening (60m), and this year's pay rises (up to £170m). Of the £102m for this year, £13m is for storm-related problems, £10m is for Aids and what remains is nowhere near the £150m which the National Association of Health Authorities says it needs just to cover unpredicted inflation.

Charles Moore, the *Spectator*'s editor, joined the chorus on *Any Questions* last week to criticise the "inefficient" NHS. Really? In 1985, the United States spent £1,388 per head on health care (both private and public); West Germany spent £722; France spent £616; Japan spent £421 and Britain spent £364. Yet life expectancy at birth barely differs between the five countries, neither does infant mortality, and heart disease, while higher in Britain than the US, is lower than in West Germany. As for the "efficient" private sector: one of Mr Moore's writers, Alexandra Artley, recently reported that just to have a baby in a London private hospital could cost around £4,000. And another, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, conceded that there is a crisis in the American system, with Health Maintenance Organisations (which in some respects are remarkably similar to the NHS — Elgy Gillespie above) gaining popularity. If even the "informed" right can't enthuse about America, how can the rest of us?

Jolyon Jenkins

See Neil Kinnock p.15

How the Devil must be laughing

LET US PAUSE, as the rest of the press hounds gay vicars, to hound a raving right-wing vicar instead. "Victorian in architecture and Victorian in outlook" is the motto of St Mark's, Dalston, and it perfectly describes the church and its incumbent, the Reverend Donald Pateman.

These are troubled times for the Church of England and Mr Pateman is a cleric full of the old fashioned moral certainties that Archbishop Runcie and the so-called liberal bishops are said to lack. His articles in the parish magazine travel under such unambiguous headlines as "Victory for the b*gg*rs" and "Have our bishops no spunk?" No one could accuse the vicar of nailing his colours to the fence.

Donald Pateman is a squat man in his 70s, with a full head of sharp white hair and an eccentric demeanour reminiscent of television personality Patrick Moore. He has worked in London for 40

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years and has been the vicar of St Marks, known locally as the "Cathedral of the East End", since 1956.

Through the pages of his campaigning parish organ, Mr Pateman hounds a sorry catalogue of moral miscreants, including gays and lesbians "who brazenly flaunt their gayness and lesbiance", "wolves clad in purple" who "will not call sin sin", "disastrous . . . and . . . pretentious female priestesses", the "insane" General Synod, "thugs and sturdy rogues who will not scruple to bash old ladies", "jelly fish judges who swallow hook, line and sinker any sob stuff put forward by the rogue's defence", all "loony lefties" and the entire Spanish nation — "Swines — it's time we outlawed Spain".

Is this the sort of decisive leadership the late Dr Gareth Bennett demanded from the church? The local Bishop of Stepney, Jim Thompson, does not approve of the outbursts but, according to Pateman, the average Hackney reader does. "Most of them agree with me. They say: 'Carry on as you are, vicar. You speak for the likes of us.'".

The vicar's influence, however, is mercifully small. St Mark's may be the largest parish church in London, capable of seating 2,000 people, but these days Pateman is lucky to see 50 faces when he rises in the pulpit to deliver his Sunday sermon. Weekday matins is consistently said for the benefit of no one but himself.

Yet Donald Pateman's lone crusade in Hackney continues. He asks those who disagree with him to beat a path to his door and argue it out "beard to beard". (Does he assume all women are on his side?) When I pitted my beard against his last week, however, he was distracted and vague. Only when asked about retirement did he give a coherent answer: "I will retire when the Good Lord tells me to. There are a load of clerics pottering along the front at Eastbourne, when they are not watering their cucumbers, who could be doing a good job of work for the Kingdom. How the Devil must be laughing!"

Tom Loxley

Labour Party gets a hearing aid

LABOUR STARTS listening on Monday week. But first, this Monday, the press listens to Neil Kinnock, as he launches "Labour Listens", a "major new development in political communication and campaigning". In other words, a public relations stunt. But this one has a deadly serious purpose: to change the culture of the party at the grassroots. The televised jamboree in Brighton on 25 January, as Roy Hattersley, Bryan Gould and Joan Lestor MPs "Listen to the South" in a sort of *Question Time* format, is only the high profile bit of the party's "major new development". Labour Listens is also meant to involve constituency parties in organising local "listening" events and "listening" canvasses. If it happens, it will come as a profound culture shock to many low-membership parties. The left wing cannot sneer: it has been saying that the party must "turn outwards" for a very long time. ●

Freedom fighter

DUNCAN CAMPBELL, the *New Statesman*'s secret weapon, has won another accolade, the Freedom of Information Campaign's 1987 media award, for his exposé of the Zircon project, concealed from parliament. The citation mentions the whole *Secret Society* series of BBC2 programmes — all but the one on Zircon were broadcast — and the articles which accompanied them (*NS* 23 January, 24 April-22 May 1987). This and other awards are to be presented by Pulitzer prize-winning journalist and author Seymour Hersh on Monday (18 January) at 5.30 at the City Conference Centre, Mark Lane, London EC3. ●

WEST END
BONNG
BONNG
BONNG
BONNG
-ERS
LISTEN BOY! IT'S HIGH TIME YOU TOOK OFF YOUR DAY-GLO BOMBER JACKET AND HAD A DOSE OF THE REAL WORLD!!!
WHICH ONE IS THAT THEN?
THE REALLY REAL, NORMAL REALM OF ORDINARY DECENT SOUTH-EASTERN SUPERSTORE SHOPPERS WHO HAVE JOBS WEAR SENSIBLE CLOTHES AND DON'T BUY LABOUR PRODUCTS BECAUSE OF THEIR EXTREM--IST IMAGE!!
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE WE'VE GOT TO SELL TO! I THINK YOU'LL BE SURPRISED..AND ASHAMED, BOY!
HEALTH CAKE
FRUIT
VEGETABLES
BISCUITS
MONEY EXTRACTION
EDUCATION
FAGS
BOOZE
WE ARE NOT KILLER ZOMBIES!!
WE ARE DISCIPLES OF ED-WEE-NA!!!
ED-WEE-NA!!!
THEATRE NURSE TO FRUIT DEPARTMENT!
ED-WEE-NA!!!
...AND I AM CONVINCED BY THE SHEER CONVICTION OF MY QUALIFYING PHRASEOLOGY THAT, WHILE NOT PROMOTING OR PATRONISING INDUSTRIAL ACTION OF ANY KIND, I AM CONCERNED THAT, BY ALLOWING SUCH A DEMONSTRATION TO COME ABOUT, THIS GOVERNMENT IS NOT SENSIBLE, UNLIKE THIS SUIT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU!!!
DON'T LET THEM EAT MY CHILD!!
ONE PLASTIC DUSTBIN, 78 TINS OF WHISKAS AND A HEART BY-PASS OPERATION - THAT'LL BE £18,432-63P!
10 BOXES OF MILK TRAY, A DOZEN OYSTERS AND A VASECTOMY - THAT'LL BE £250 EXACTLY SIR!!
INSPIRATIONAL NEIL!!
'OO'S THE WINDY DULLARD??
"NOT SENSIBLE"!!??! THEY'RE VICIOUS, BLOODY, MONEYGRUBBING MONSTERS!!
NICE THREADS!
CAN I HAVE YOUR AUTO-GRAPH??
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Communist Owenites

THE COMMUNIST Campaign Group, which announced last weekend that it was at last splitting from the British Communist Party, has decided to play by the David Owen rules for party conflict. Four out of five delegates voted to support the party leadership at the "watershed" Congress in November, but the Communist Campaign Group has announced that the real majority of communists is on its side. Thus they are not splitting by refusing to move with the majority, but staying put to "preserve" the Party.

The split has appeared inevitable since the early 1980s when two quite different poles of attraction emerged in the party: the *Morning Star*, wedded to "traditional" communism, of the 1950s and 1960s vintage, and *Marxism Today*, promulgating a form of post-eurocommunism.

The hardliners have spent the last two years building up a shadow party organisation, a fact which has led to most of the 100-odd expulsions. They have also spent the time arguing over whether to stay and fight or split and go. Several dissidents, including white-collar union TASS's Ken Gill, have favoured a less formal organisation allowing the involvement of Labour Party hardliners around the *Morning Star*.

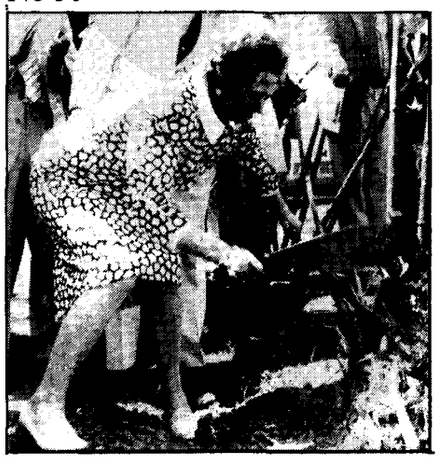
The Campaign Group organiser, Ray Colvin, bases his argument and arithmetic on the belief that whatever membership figures (10,500) the leadership produces, these are a poor gauge of support for communism. Better "barometers", he says, are the mere 3,500 people who have so far taken out party cards for 1988 and the voting at the People's Press Printing Society, the co-op which owns the *Star*. Colvin says that voting shareholders are "almost wholly" Communist Party members, and they are with the Campaign Group. On these figures, he is hoping for a membership of around 2,000, the vast majority of whom will be existing party members. As for the name, this is not decided, but "logic", he says, leads to . . . the Communist Party.

These may be Dr Owen's rules. But they were pioneered by the Workers' Revolutionary Party, whose schisms at one point produced three parties laying claim to being the true WRP. Those hardliners who opposed a separate organisation fear the fate of the Campaign Group may be not dissimilar.

Sarah Benton

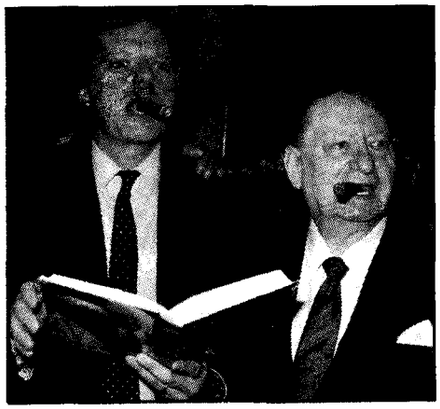
If the caption fits

No 50



Many thanks to Denis Ridgeway for drawing our attention to Mrs T. having a bit of trouble with her photo call in Kenya. The trouble with machetes is you've *got* to remember which end's the handle. Captions or speech bubbles to be in by Monday 25 January. Ten-pound book token for the winner.

Winner: No 48



Lew Grade: "Michael, what sort of a condom advert do you call this?" *(D. J. MacPherson, Stowmarket.)*

Thatcher in Africa

IN A CAREFULLY worded statement during her visit to Kenya and Nigeria last week Margaret Thatcher suggested that Britain would back a renewed diplomatic offensive to bring pressure on Pretoria:

> I continue to believe that the concept devised by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) still offers the best prospect of progress towards negotiations between all parties in South Africa, against the background of suspension of violence.

In an interview intended for publication in Lagos before her arrival she referred to the EPG as a Commonwealth achievement, adding, "We would like to see Nigeria take a more active part in the Commonwealth."

Nigeria was, of course, deeply involved in the previous EPG attempt to set up South African peace talks. The former Nigerian Head of State, General Obasanjo, was co-chair of the EPG mission to South Africa in 1986. In the event Britain refused to act on the EPG recommendations (which included the imposition of sanctions), and the EPG petered out. Obasanjo blamed Thatcher personally for this failure.

Any attempt to revive the EPG would explain her insistence on including Nigeria in her itinerary, despite earlier attempts by President Babangida to head her off. She arrived in Lagos in the middle of a bitter foreign policy row, involving southern African diplomacy, past and present. Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, the most pro-Western Foreign Minister in recent years, has just been dropped from the government, partly for failing to convey effectively Nigeria's resentment at Britain's new discriminatory visa regulations. Another ex-Foreign Minister, Major-General Joe Garba, who held office when Obasanjo was Head of State, has recently published his amazingly frank memoirs,* which reveal a lot about the constant tension and at times open hostility in relations between Britain and Nigeria — Britain's biggest African market.

The list of Nigerian grievances against Britain is long and bitter. Garba chronicles some of them. "In 1983, when Nigeria was found facing a dire economic crisis, what did Britain do? With scarcely concealed glee she undercut Nigeria's oil price . . ." British companies are unwilling to invest in manufacturing Nigeria's own resources, and until they do, "we should pursue a deliberate policy of importing our truly essential requirements from countries other than Britain."

Garba is now Nigeria's permanent representative at the United Nations, and as chair of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid he retains a platform for exposing the hypocrisy of Britain's South Africa policy. President Babangida last week, in his "heart-to-heart" with Thatcher, was more polite but told her to reconsider her assessment of where her country's interests lie. Britain's trade with South Africa is dwarfed by that with the rest of Africa; it is not in her interest to encourage the black Commonwealth countries to place their trade elsewhere. He reminded her that Nigeria supported the African National Congress, the liberation movement which she had recently called "terrorist". She wished to encourage negotiations between all parties in South Africa, but there could be no settlement without the ANC.

The Thatcher entourage dropped hints in Lagos that the Prime Minister herself might visit South Africa if there were any indication that this might help set up a renewed EPG initiative. This did not improve the atmosphere. In Kano the following day a Nigerian soldier mistakenly put his rifle butt into the face of Bernard Ingham; he was only trying to protect him from the admiring crowd, it was said.

Suzanne Cronje

*Diplomatic Soldiering: Nigerian Foreign Policy, 1975-1979, *Spectrum Books, Ibadan*

No to prejudice

AFTER A LIMP and defensive initial response to the government-backed clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, to prohibit local councils "promoting homosexuality", Labour and other opposition coalesced this week in the House of Lords, as the Bill went into its committee stage there. Fears that the new clause may signal further attacks on the civil rights of gays and other minorities were marked by a 12,000-strong march on Whitehall last Saturday.

Lesbians and gays, alongside others concerned with the exploitation of the Aids epidemic against them, will be marching again next Sunday, 24 January, in a candle-lit "procession of remembrance and action" (for Aids and human rights respectively). The march, and a conference the next day, is aimed at the world press as it converges on London to attend the first "world summit of ministers of health" on the control of Aids, starting in London the following Tuesday.

Duncan Campbell

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NEWSTATESPERSON

Wicked Willie

LORD WHITELAW'S departure brought with it the lavish and fulsome praise one could predict for a politician of his inexhaustible charm. Hardly a word has been whispered against him: loyal, civilised, sheetanchor for the present administration, friend to the oppressed. Thatcher herself — the well-drilled tear about to fall — appeared almost affectionate, while Heath saw no reason to temper his unequivocal stance: "The last of those in the present government who has the true Conservative view."

Loyalty to the shrewd party manager is indeed part of the story. His rise in the ranks occurred through the Whips Office, first recruited by Heath in 1959 then, as Chief Whip from 1964, winning the prestige of managing the successful transition of leader from Douglas-Home to his old patron. The mentality of these early years, the determination to hold the party steady, has remained with him: the betrayals perpetrated by Enoch Powell still hang heavy.

True too is his Baldwinite determination to stay sweet with Labour moderates, a skill he learnt from his first electoral contest against David Kirkwood on Clydebank in 1950, and which later was to win him friends and influence while leader of the Commons and the Lords.

Less convincing is the image of Whitelaw the flaccid bumbler, keen as he often is to cultivate the persona. He has been tough and ruthless, as Lord Young recently discovered to his cost. More candidly, Whitelaw has admitted: "I'm not as stupid as I look." His patrician disdain at what he regards as the vulgar ordeal of the party conference represents the boredom of the committee-man, frustrated that mass democracy requires such squalid spectacles.

But in all the schmalz of the press coverage the central issue has been lost. It is not at all that Whitelaw is the only one to have stood up against Thatcher — in the crazed deflationary drive of 1981 his head was well down — but rather that this One Nation Tory and unrepentant Heathite was the principal architect of the Thatcherite regime, consolidating and extending its influence at the heart of the state. Moreover, this has indeed been the *characteristic* response of the erstwhile Heathmen; the decision of those who most readily regarded themselves as Wet to hang in there till summarily sacked has, conversely, been the exception.

In this sense, Whitelaw, his ear to the ground as ever, has been representative. The significance of his career suggests that we should not be mesmerised by a quasi-sociological explanation of politics — the *noblesse oblige* of the patricians shattered by the grubby *poujadistes* from Grantham. Whitelaw personified the ease with which seemingly contrary versions of Conservatism could, under the right conditions, be satisfactorily reconciled, the political exigencies themselves demanding that former cherished values be set aside for the duration.

Bill Schwarz

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

The Index to Vol. 113 is now available, price £2.50 (incl. p&p). Send remittance to **New Statesman (Index), Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8BA.**

POLITICAL SKETCH

The Wapter effect

Edward Pearce

"WHEREOF WE cannot know, thereof we should not speak." Wittgenstein's observation, always useful for raising the tone of a weekly publication, is apt comment for the hell-raising during Prayers of John Hughes. Whereto we are not admitted, thereof we cannot write a parliamentary sketch. But the thought lingers that if Labour does not want to play terminally into the hands of a Prime Minister itching to Bernard Inghamise the Commons through the medium of a pliant Speaker, it will discourage all those whose ill-considered exhibitionism undermines a scrupulous and liberal-minded occupant of the chair.

There is a steady, authorised murmur against Mr Weatherill, who has declined to be a matching accessory of the Conservative government. But if nonsenses like Monday's disruption of Prayers take place, not only the initiator, John Hughes, but those backbenchers who knew about it will have to take responsibility for giving authoritarianism its cue line. The buck comes back to Derek Foster, who failed to stop the outburst. The elected office of Chief Whip has weakened its command. You can't, by definition, have a populist chief whip; if he tries, you get what Joyce called the rabblement. End of sermon.

By contrast, what a pleasure it was to watch the encounter, if not of David and Jonathan, then of David and Gerald. Mr Kaufman raising the Gaza incident, spoke of the obduracy of Mr Shamir, the 20-year deprivation of the Palestinian people, and approved of the minister's remarks. Mr Mellor commended the observations and the Sunday article of Mr Kaufman and was delighted that whatever else divided the House, this issue did not.

Philip Roth has a magnificent character in the Nathan Zuckerman novels, a B'nai Brith activist and obvious reader of *Commentary* called Leopold Wapter, who responds to every mild family irony about the Zuckermans and their neighbours in the fictional novels with long letters politely asking how long the author has been a dedicated anti-semite and hater of his mother and father. This role is performed in the British press by Mr Lionel Bloch, who must have written more letters in defence of the indefensible than Mrs Thatcher has issued writs.

In the Commons we only have Greville Janner, a Labour MP compelled by long habit to defend the actions of an Israeli Prime Minister beside whom Mrs Thatcher sounds like Thomas Jefferson. There was sorrow at the loss of life of course, he began, but was not the minister's lack of tact (there's real atrocity for you) helpful only to extremists on both sides? The Wapter effect was received with the sort of tired derision reserved for things people have given up bothering to deride. This front bench detente, quite the closest we have seen since Merlyn Rees and Willie Whitelaw used to sigh over their own parties' excesses at Home Office Questions, indicates that the British political world has broken through the Wapter gap and is going to say politely sharp things about Israel when and as they are deserved!

Joy of a melancholy sort attended on the Chancellor's statement about the condition of Britoil. I have never been able to take this company seriously by reason of its dreadful 1930s name, suggesting something clammy with a touch of musk, retailed by the bottle for the better macassaring of the type of city clerks who grin at you out of posters of the day on their way to glorious Clacton or while buying a semi in Wembley in 1934. However, we must not be swept away by the naffness of Nigel Lawson's commercial titles. BP is after Britoil; and Kuwait, sensible fellows, are after BP. All of this is the great March crisis, not to be worried about here till it happens. The Chancellor sensibly played for time and waved his debentures at the predators. This was not enough for George Galloway, who proclaimed his view with that lowering contempt which designates a Scottish Labour MP happy with the universe.

"This," said George," is the first time I've witnessed the legendary arrogance and complacency of the Chancellor of the Exchequer." "You should come more often," said a Tory voice. The House fell apart; which George, somewhat egotistically, took for laughter at *him*; so he routinely denounced Tory buffoons. My impression is that the person concerned will be helping government whips with their inquiries. That was the authentic Gaza strip voice of Tory backbenchers who have to hear the arrogance and complacency all the time.

We had at the start of the week a day almost entirely Scottish, Tartan Monday, putting to shame for its steady depression any of those days gaily called "Black". It is not that one doesn't like Mr Rifkind and Mr Dewar. Each in his angular academic way, "if I may say so", "the Right Honourable Gentleman, I regret to say, is wholly mistaken", is at the other end of the planet from John Hughes, and indeed from the naffia of modestly talented and noisily interminable Scottish backbenchers of whom Bill Walker (Con) and Willie McKelvey (Lab) are only examples.

My impression is that the housing legislation introduced by Mr Rifkind was one of the milder pieces of Conservative legislation and with its emphasis on the private rented sector liable to catch Labour neatly between what it used to believe in and what, under the stewardship of the treason, betrayal and commonsense tendency, it may very soon come to believe.

It is interesting to watch the Conservatives being broadly constructive and neither arresting nor suppressing anybody. They don't have to squirm, they don't need half-witted boy patriots from the back benches, and they tend to win, at least on points, even against bright people like Donald Dewar. The worst atrocity of the afternoon was Rifkind's breathless reference to "many other exciting forms of tenure". What a pleasure to escape to the comparative eirenia of market forces. □

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Abortion — the battle for public opinion

There's a huge consensus behind the existing abortion law, but it's under constant attack.* JANE DIBBLIN *examines the anti-abortion lobby's campaign to win over public opinion and David Alton's attempt to exploit unease about late abortions

IT IS A winter's evening in a chilly half-empty room in the House of Commons. The woman next to me pulls her fur coat around her more tightly as the lights are dimmed and a video crackles into action. The audience are members of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child; the film is US doctor and producer Bernard Nathanson's *Eclipse of Reason* — the sequel to his *The Silent Scream*.

Its first shot is of an 18-week foetus and an announcement: "During the next eight minutes we will be witnesses to an ultimate act of violence. This child will be destroyed before your eyes." Using a fibre-optic camera we are shown, with replays, the dilation and evacuation taking place; it is a distressing and disturbing process to watch. By 18 weeks it is necessary to crush the skull of the foetus to remove it. The foetus is first given an injection which painlessly kills it. The film omits that detail.

At no time are you shown the woman as anything other than a pair of anaesthetised legs. Why she ended up having a late abortion — and why she agreed for it to be filmed — are never put to her. For this film-maker she has no existence, except as the carrier of the foetus.

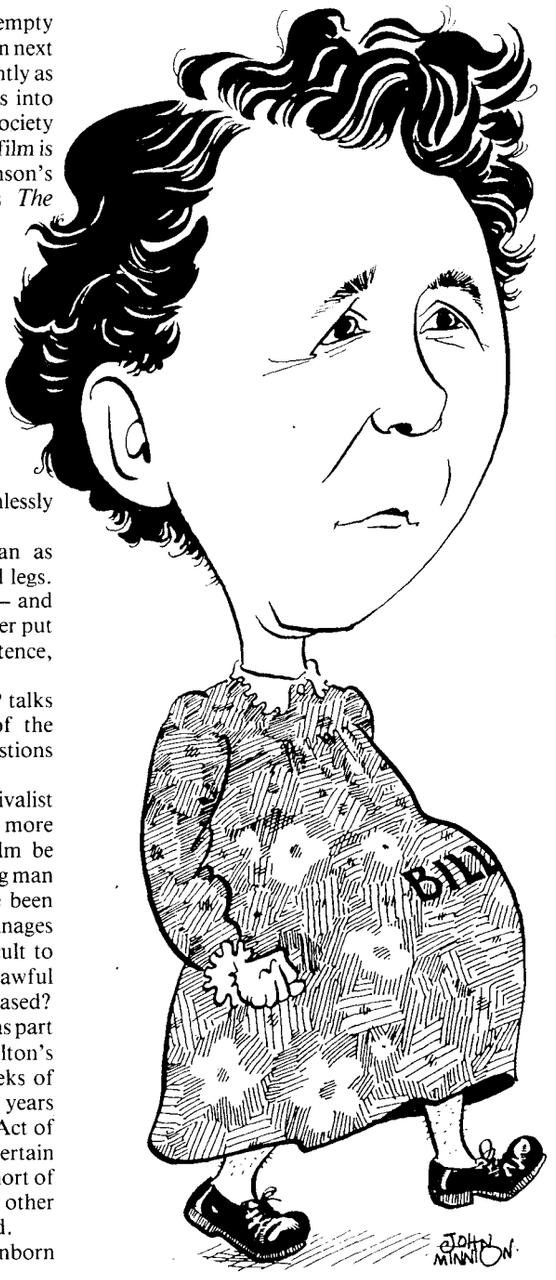
The lights go up and Bernard Braine MP talks — for the third time that evening — of the "abomination of abortion" and invites questions to a panel of anti-abortion campaigners.

The questions ring out as if at a revivalist meeting. When will the media give us more coverage? When will the Truth in this film be revealed to the World? Eventually, the young man in front of me, whose neck and ears have been turning deeper and deeper shades of red, manages to put in his questions. Why is it so difficult to prosecute those who carry out unlawful abortions? Why can't the penalties be increased?

The meeting in the House of Commons was part of a process of rallying support for David Alton's bill to restrict abortions to the first 18 weeks of pregnancy. Alton's is the 14th attempt in 21 years to change David Steel's original Abortion Act of 1967. That act made abortion legal under certain conditions, fairly loosely drafted, but fell short of endorsing women's right to choose. All the other attempts failed; but Alton may well succeed.

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child has been one of the most visible and formidable pressure groups of the past 20 years. It has about 40,000 members, an annual income of £750,000 and a large following in the House of Commons. Its members are currently inundating MPs with cards of an 18-week-old foetus sucking its thumb.

SPUC is flanked by Life, the caring face of the anti-abortion lobby. Life is made up of two organisations: the campaign, Life — Save the Unborn Child, and a registered care and housing charity which provides pregnancy and post-abortion counselling and temporary housing for vulnerable young mothers. In 1986, Life's income was £126,000, and that of its charitable wing, £108,000. Their campaign coordinator says they spent only £20,000 on last year's "Twenty Years On" campaign with its posters carrying slogans like "1967-87, The Killing Years" and "20 Years On — Three Million Dead".



The anti-abortion lobby has made two major attempts fundamentally to change the abortion law — the Corrie and White bills in 1975 and 1979. Both failed. The reason is simple: for all the sensational publicity that the lobby has generated, it has failed in the most vital arena of all: public opinion. The original abortion law reformers finally got their bill through the Commons in 1967 by being able to demonstrate widespread public approval for its provisions. Thus far, the anti-abortion lobby has not been able significantly to reverse the public view.

David Alton says that he chose abortion rather than any other social reform with which he is associated because he'd rather be remembered for fighting for something he feels passionate about than for something that's easily winnable. With the nose of a true political animal, he has perhaps done both. "Utopia", he says, would be a near complete ban on abortion. But by going for an upper limit he has sensed the mood of the electorate and parliament.

Though he says, in a Thatcherite tone of old-fashioned commonsense, "no one is in favour of abortion", he is also clearly aware that opinion polls show that the overwhelming consensus for abortion on Steel's terms remains impregnable. The majorities among the public for abortions on the grounds of rape, the woman's health and unborn foetus's disability range from 85 to 92 per cent. Only the most fundamentalist anti-abortion MPs really dare tangle with such clear expressions of public opinion.

Moreover, people generally accept the principle of a woman's right to choose. A 1987 Marplan poll, commissioned by the Abortion Law Reform Association, showed that 79 per cent believed that the decision whether or not to continue a pregnancy should be left to a woman, though in consultation with her doctor. Another Marplan poll the previous year found that two-thirds believed that women should be able to have an abortion if they asked for one.

Tolerance towards abortion has, if anything, increased in recent years. According to the British Social Attitudes surveys, more people now believe that abortion is a matter of personal choice. More people believe that a woman should be able to have an abortion if she isn't married and doesn't want to marry (up from 44 to 51 per cent between 1983

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and 1986); if a couple agree they don't want a child (up from 46 to 56 per cent); and if the woman on her own decides she doesn't want a child (up from 37 to 46 per cent). The reason is presumably that under the flexible conditions of the Steel Act, more women have had experience of abortions and have talked it through with friends and acquaintances. And so understanding of their motives and feelings grows.

Yet the public feel very uneasy about *late* abortions. Medical technology is now such that premature babies, aged only 28 weeks, can quite often survive. The anti-abortion argument is that it is distressing for medical staff to go through the painful processes of aborting late foetuses while they or their colleagues may also be called upon to fight for the life of a foetus only a few weeks older. This argument has been reinforced by "horror stories" in the popular press, videos like Dr Nathanson's and much else of SPUC's propaganda.

Glynis Donovan, of Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre, said "If Alton wins, it will be thanks to the doctors' lobby, not SPUC and Life, despite their efficient campaigning machine. In the wake of a report by the Royal College of Obstetricians on late abortion in 1984, some doctors began exerting pressure on the issue of viability of the foetus. We are not unsympathetic to that: our point is that if the system works properly, very, very few women should be having late abortions. Those that do are often the ones who need it the most: the teenager too frightened to tell anyone or the woman with a severely deformed foetus. Doctors are already in an extremely powerful position because the 1967 Act is discretionary: only half the total number of abortions performed are done on the NHS and in some areas that is down to 10 per cent because the doctors are unsympathetic and just say no."

Opinions and statistics

SPUC now claims that 83 per cent of women support Alton's proposal for an 18-week limit on abortions. But behind that one simple, apparently solid, figure lies a complex statistical tale. The figure comes from

- a single sample of 454 women
- it excludes "don't knows" (16 per cent), leaving 381 women
- it includes the majority of the sample who chose the most neutral answer on offer, that the bill was "about right". (The other possible answers were "too strict" or "not strict enough".)

This isn't the end of the tale. SPUC commissioned Gallup to carry out at least two opinion polls. The first, which SPUC uses in its literature and still quotes when answering press inquiries, was carried out between 8 and 13 October 1987. The *New Statesman* has obtained the results of a second poll (29 October/3 November 1987). SPUC chooses not to mention the results of this later poll which show a dramatic drop in support for Alton's bill on their own reckoning — from 83 to 62 per cent (the figure on our cover). Presumably, they would have used it had it shown an equally sharp increase in support.

The heavy steer in the framing of the question makes a "safe" reading of the results hazardous, but if you combine the two samples, you could say that 56 per cent of women think the bill is "about right" or "not strict enough"; 27 per cent think it is "too strict"; and 17 per cent don't know. These figures still, of course, provide a base for Alton to succeed, though a *Panorama* survey of MPs found that he would lose on 18 weeks, but get a majority for 24.

Alton's bill addresses a mere 3.3 per cent of abortions performed (5,665 in 1986). While he makes much of the distress of medical staff who perform late abortions, he doesn't seem to have much concern for that of the women, who almost all fall into the following categories: women from abroad where abortion is illegal; teenage women who hadn't dared admit they are pregnant; women who have experienced delays in the NHS; menopaused women who hadn't realised they were pregnant; and women carrying a severely disabled foetus. The 1984 report by the Royal College of Obstetricians found that half the abortions performed after 20 weeks were on young women under 20; and one in five had been waiting for an abortion after being referred before the twelfth week.

> ***"Continual pressure against existing abortion rights tends to squeeze the room for discussion of ambivalence and grief"***

Plainly, Alton could seek the opportunity to legislate to remove obstacles to late abortion and campaign for better counselling and advice services, especially for the under-20s. When gynaecologist Peter Huntingford opened a day centre in Tower Hamlets in 1977 he cut the rate of late abortions from 9 to 1.8 per cent. But that is not really Alton's aim. He means to chip away at the cornerstone of opinion which believes in the need for most abortions and sympathises with the idea of woman's right to choose. He openly says: "Legislation is a way of changing the climate of the times."

Publicly, SPUC and Life are right behind Alton. But privately their active workers are far from happy. His proposal, says SPUC's parliamentary worker, Christopher Whitehouse, is not "the bill of our choice." SPUC would prefer to try and restrict abortion to cases of "serious risk" and "substantial effects", but Alton agreed to take up the issue only if he could dictate the terms. Yet he is having trouble holding onto the reins at the weekly campaign meetings; he's riding a headstrong horse which could bolt in the direction of the embarrassing adverts which appeared during other campaigns, with references to the murderers of sandcastle builders.

At the film session, Phyllis Bowman, director of SPUC, defends Alton against the fundamentalists: "Politics is the art of the possible. If it is possible to save even one tiny life, then we have achieved something."

Even within the anti-abortion lobby, there are tangible tensions. Life's director, Mrs Nuala Scarisbrick, tells me tartly that her organisation had commissioned its own video, *18 Weeks Alive or Dead* "because we don't want an American import or horror pictures" — a clear signal of disapproval of SPUC using Nathanson's film.

Ambivalence

The anti-abortion lobby is on strong ground when it draws attention to women's possible feelings of ambivalence and loss about abortion. And there is no reason to cast doubt upon its sincerity here, though the feminist-style presentation of some of their literature rings a false note. "Abortion," declares Margaret Wright, gynaecologist and SPUC campaigner, "is a male chauvinist rip-off" — it allows men to think they can have sex without having to handle the consequences. Life has published a special pamphlet, *Abortion: the feminist sell-out*, by Daphne de Jong, "national president of a New Zealand Feminist Organisation". She argues that abortion is a symptom of women's self-hatred, identification with male values and scapegoating the foetus. Abortion, she writes, "is a far deeper and more destructive assault upon womankind than rape". Nathanson's film and SPUC and Life literature all talk of the trauma of women being panicked into an abortion which they later regret.

And yet the continual pressure against existing abortion rights tends to squeeze the room for discussion of these feelings of ambivalence and grief. There's a natural danger that people who are forced onto the defensive will suppress their own doubts less they be hijacked and turned against them. But in the early 1980s, with Corrie and White defeated, there was a blossoming of discussion among its defenders. A Channel Four series and a book by Angela Neustatter, both entitled *Abortion: Mixed Feelings*, articles in *Spare Rib* and public debates all encouraged women to be honest about their feelings following abortions. For some, it had been a relief: for others, this provided the space to admit to grief and find others to share it with.

The "climate" David Alton may succeed in creating is one where these feelings are again swept under the carpet, as women concentrate on the defence of the basic right to control their fertility, if need be, by an abortion. SPUC and Life constantly argue that women should have the chance to consider the consequences before having an abortion. So long as that is not advanced as a mandatory obstacle, the pro-abortionists should have no difficulty in agreeing with them — and showing how restrictive attitudes make real counselling and consideration very much harder to achieve.

Ruth Riddick, who runs a telephone help-line in Ireland, where abortion is illegal, says that a recent court ruling against the provision of information about abortion services in the United Kingdom has made it all but impossible for women to arrive at thought-out decisions. "If you have a chance to examine other options, to go through the problems and implications of having an abortion before doing something irrevocable, then you will make a decision you will be happy with later. But that's not happening because women are now making decisions under pressure and in panic" (*McGill*, January 1988).

The pro-choice lobby in Britain has moved beyond the simple slogans of the '70s: "What do we want?" "Abortion." "When do we want it?" "Now." In defending the Steel Act, in arguing for qualitative changes in abortion services at local level, and in advancing the case for choice by the person who is most affected, it is important that Alton does not force them back into an over-simplistic view of reproduction. Their position can only be made stronger by accepting and arguing from the complex human emotions and contradictions which surround abortion. Alton may succeed in restricting abortion; they should not let him restrict their political territory. □

Additional research by Tom Loxley

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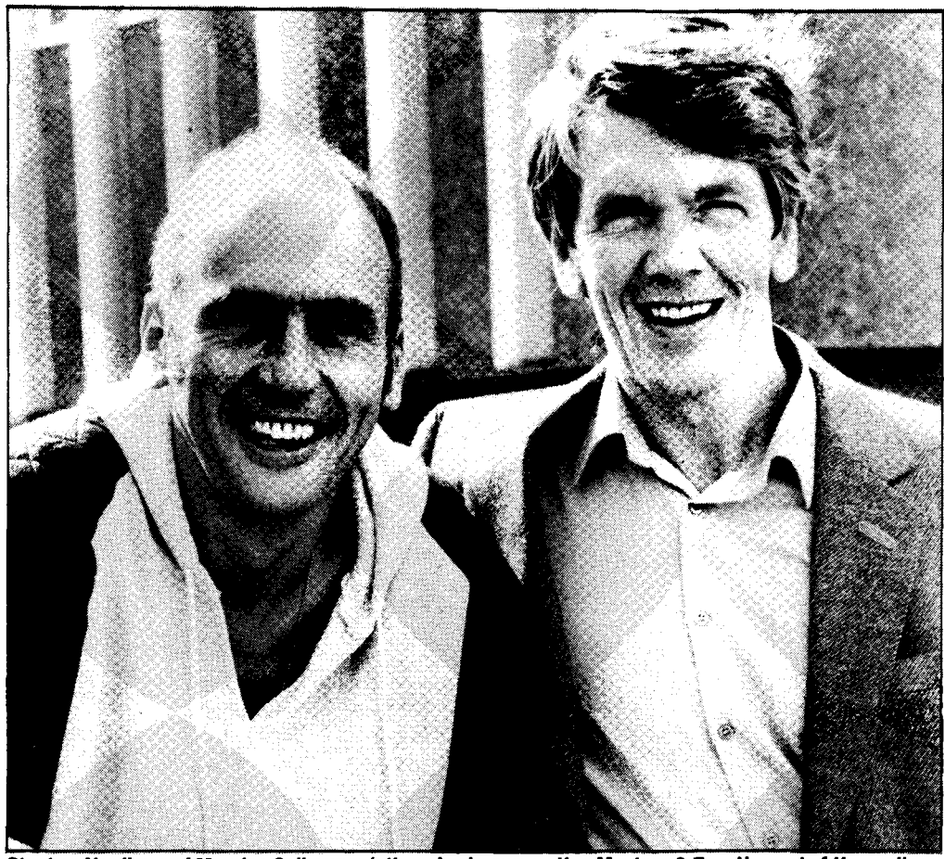

Express Newspapers

Stephen Yardley and Maurice Colbourne (otherwise known as Ken Masters & Tom Howard of *Howard's Way*) making yet another devastating critique of Mrs Thatcher's Britain

AT SEA

I love my rubber duck

JOHN SWEENEY *puts ashore at the London International Boat Show*

THERE'S Dylan Thomas's sloe-black, slow black, crow black, fishing-boat bobbing sea. There's James Joyce's snotgreen, scrotum-tightening sea. Conrad's enticing, disenchanting and enslaving sea. And the London International Boat Show at Earl's Court: a murky puddle of ersatz briny, washing insipidly against the smooth bottoms of several million pounds worth of snake-jawed power-boats, ocean-going brothels, air-conditioned, plus pile-carpeted gin palaces and other fancy rubber-duck substitutes of wet-suited wealth.

Anchors aweigh, as the *Daily Express*, the show's sponsor, wittily quips. There are a lot of bargains to be had if you're the sort of plutocrat who tips your merchant banker. Would sir be interested in the Malibu 47, for example? It features eight deck cleats, a wet bar with ice maker, cockpit lights, six fenders, five scatter cushions, four warps, three automatic fire extinguishers, two single beds and a Sumlog paddlewheel. A snip for around £300,000. Not forgetting the Malibu's "sea toilet electric". For some reason the yachting correspondent of the *New Statesman* picked up a sackful of leaflets on hand-operated or electric sea toilets, the pick of which appears to be the Lavac Zenith, which has, says its promotional literature, "a large capacity bowl designed so that the toilet can be used with the boat heeled". Any port in a storm, old chap.

And who's this salty mariner athwart a rubber inflatable, with a yo-ho-ho and a bottle of hair gel? Why it's that bloke on the telly . . . you know . . . Noel Chegwin? Dave Lee Dimbleby? Nick Bird's Eye? . . . Never mind. He steers the battery-driven inflatable and speaks to himself or, rather, intones a piece-to-camera to a radio mike as a small town of BBC technicians record the event. A French woman from the Guernsey PR team — a bastard-plastic £170,000 version of Guernsey's main harbour rings the ersatz puddle — says: "Eet eez Mike Smith, eez it not?" Perhaps eet eez.

The man who might be Mike Smith is not the only television celebrity at the show. There are two stars from *Howard's Way*, Tom Howard and Ken Masters. *Howard's Way* is a BBC detergent drama which documents the couplings and uncouplings of people connected to a Hampshire boat-building firm. (Later, a man in a Kilburn pub told me: "*Howard's Way* is an unconscious yet devastating critique of Thatcher's Britain: everybody screws everybody else, see?") But as I have never seen it I was not able to recognise any of these life-jacketed libertines.

And now the cavernous exhibition hall, disappointingly empty of squawking gulls, thumps with the strident beat of disco music. The plastic St Peter Port harbour front has become the stage for a fashion show by a raincoat company whose name has something to do with fruit: blackberry? raspberry? The largely anorexic mannequins, who prance about to the tune of "Gone Fishin'", are followed by a cutlass swinging demonstration by Royal Navy volunteers from *HMS Sultan*. The Boat Show catalogue interestingly notes:

> The demonstration of cutlass swinging and free play may appear to have little relevance in today's modern Navy of computers and missiles. However, the training that these young men have undergone has produced a high degree of discipline, comradeship and courage.

The crowd waits with bated breath for a display of derring-do, of that noble dash which drummed the Dons out of Devon all those years ago. Not a bit of it: a group of pimply youths stand on little boxes to wave their objects about in the manner made fashionable by windmills to the sound of Rod Stewart's "Sailing". After long minutes, the pimply youths get off their boxes and face each other, their fearsome cutlasses in hand. The weapons carve a slice through the air with pantomime slowness. Clank! (Two second pause.) Clank! (Two second pause.) Clank! As an exciting and dangerous exhibition of cold steel, it is marginally duller than watching a railwayman in his junction box changing the points.

While all this phoney war is going on, waves are made in the ersatz puddle. No ocean-avoiding boat is complete without its mermaid. Enter Miss Manchester United, wearing a sulphur-coloured one-piece bathing costume, who has presumably swum down the Ship Canal to pout nautically on the back of a trowel-bowed power-boat, the price of a whole Third World navy. For the clicking cameras Miss Manchester United preens and simpers and repeatedly snaps the straps of her costume, a nervous tic perhaps. And who wouldn't be a touch neurotic as a thousand male faces inspect her strut? She's too much for one jowly, bearded pirate in a check suit and tasselled shoes. As she pouts over the ersatz sea, our man gives her a push and *splash!* in she goes.

Bystander Colin Meek witnessed the incident: "It wasn't very funny. She was just doing her job when I saw him give her a hell of a push. She could have been hurt. He caught her completely unawares. To hell with him."

The pirate breathed alcohol fumes: "It was just a bit of fun, that's all." He would not give his name, but said he was from Sepia Visual Arts, who have made a video for the Royal Yachting Association. Eyeing my notebook anxiously, the mermaid-pusher said: "You've got to be subtle. The RYA are very keen on safety." And so is the harbour-master, Sam Keyworth: "If it happens again there will be a lot of bother."

The pushing incident was a potentially nasty outbreak of a rampant sexism which was as much a feature of the Boat Show as pools of vomit on a cross-Channel ferry. Wherever you go, there's always that little nuggety puddle of sick. According to the *Star* — the paper that supports aquatic bacteria — the star of the boat show is a £¼ million vessel owned by Mike Rickard, boss of a cleaning firm, "affectionately named Fat Bottom Girl" after this wife Maureen . . . "Ample bows, broad beam and rounded topsides fitted Mike's blueprint perfectly" tap-tapped the *Star* hack. May it snag its bottom on a sewage pipe.

Let us dream of the day when a multi-millionaire female boss of a cleaning firm names her gin-palace Little Prick. □

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Both programmes are available on FREE LOAN in VHS, BETA and U-MATIC cassette formats. Nuclear Power – The Next Generation is also available on 16mm film. They are also available for purchase: 16mm film (£248) U-MATIC (£33.35) VHS/BETA (£14.95). Prices include VAT.

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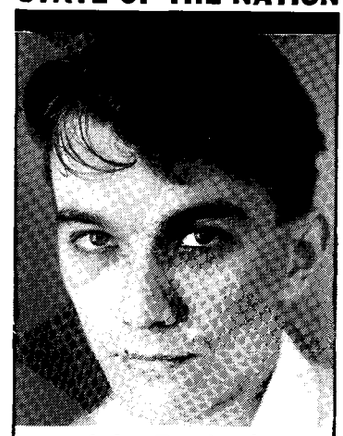
STATE OF THE NATION



John Rentoul

Learning the GLC lessons

WHY WAS THE Labour GLC popular? It matters: the rightness of claims or counter-claims could decide Labour's future. Neil Kinnock, for example, decided that Ken Livingstone's Greater London Council administration had nothing to teach him, that he could gain nothing from it. He kept his distance from the GLC, even during its campaign aganst its own abolition when it fought an all-party battle in the Lords and recruited the Queen to open the Thames flood barrier.

The Labour Party leader clearly thought then that Livingstone's brand of socialism was deeply unpopular, and that any temporary political advantage gained against a government that was seen to be abolishing democratic institutions was not worth the disadvantage of the national Labour Party becoming identified with the unpopular bits of the 1981 London Labour platform.

The opposing viewpoint is that the GLC generally, and its campaign against abolition in particular, were models for the labour movement The GLC's politics were eclectic, going beyond the traditional boundaries of Labour support, and its anti-abolition campaign tried to put together the widest possible alliance of special interests. This succeeded in making Labour far more popular in London than in the rest of the country, runs the argument. Since the GLC was abolished, the timid party leadership's lack of radicalism has led to the disaster of the 1987 general election. This perspective has been most persistently advanced by Ken Livingstone himself, especially in his autohagiography *If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It* (Collins £12), but also by others, such as Hilary Wainwright in her *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* (Hogarth £5.95).

THE ANTI-GLC line has been most vehemently argued by R. W. Johnson — no fan of Kinnock — in the *London Review of Books* (10 December):

> The general election results in London showed clearly enough how shallow and conditional Livingstone's popularity had really been. Ms Wainwright cheerfully recommends Labour to take the GLC path. It's rather like a Tory activist suggesting that the best way ahead for the Conservatives would be to invade Suez or re-stage the Profumo Affair.

Well, *is* that what the general election showed? Hindsight is now available to us in a neat package, namely Robert Waller's book of his Harris opinion polls for the GLC between 1983 and 1986 *(Moulding Political Opinion,* Croom Helm £19.95). Waller's conclusions tend to support Kinnock and R. W. Johnson against Livingstone and Wainwright. If Waller's analysis of his own material is right, then it was Labour's national campaign managers Bryan Gould and Peter Mandelson who learned the lessons of the GLC abolition campaign, and the London Labour left which failed to do so.

Waller's data confirm that the GLC's campaign had a big and sustained effect lifting Labour's lead over the Tories by between 8 and 22 percentage points in London compared with the national picture, from December 1983 to abolition in April 1986. In September 1984, at the peak of the battle against the abolition legislation in parliament, and when Labour was trailing the Conservatives by 4 points in a national opinion poll, Labour was 18 points ahead in London. Nor was this just reflected in opinion polls: in real votes all over London, in council by-elections, there were big swings to Labour throughout 1984.

But the end of the "GLC effect" was instantaneous: in the May 1986 local elections, just six weeks after the GLC ceased to exist, Labour's performance in London was no different from anywhere else. A Marplan poll in November 1986 showed a Conservative lead of 6 percentage points in London and only 3.5 points nationally. And in the general election in June 1987, the Tory lead in London was 15 points, as against 11 points overall.

The reasons for this sudden collapse lie in the nature of popular support for the GLC, revealed in Waller's book for the first time. In November 1985 Harris found that the GLC scored highly for "doing a good job", "caring for people like me"

> ***Increasing respect for Ken Livingstone as a leader did not seem to increase respect for most of the things he stood for***

and "keeping election promises". It also did well on "having a good leader" and on "fighting government policies". It seems as if Ken Livingstone had built up respect for the "Thatcherite" virtue of sticking to his guns, combined with an ability to listen to ordinary people and to conduct an effective opposition to unpopular central government policies. But the GLC scored badly on "spending money sensibly" and on being "in control of money spent".

Harris's qualitative research, which involved discussing the GLC in depth with small groups of voters, revealed that "the council's initiatives on housing, jobs and transport were applauded to some extent, but really Londoners had little understanding of the exact role of the GLC".

Furthermore, most whites had "little sympathy" for anti-racist policies, while there was "very strong opposition to the GLC's ideas of intervention to further women's, gay and lesbian rights; it was felt that this was not a suitable sphere for the expenditure of public money". A phrase often thrown up by these discussion groups was that the GLC spent money on "crazy schemes".

HARRIS'S FINDINGS led to a dispute between the GLC's officers and the politicians. The politicians wanted to mount a campaign based on protecting jobs and services. Tony Wilson, the GLC's director of publicity, and Boase Massimi Pollitt, the GLC's advertising agency, argued against this approach, "on the grounds of public ignorance of the 'mainstream' services and hostility towards the 'controversial' ones", says Waller. So the theme was democracy and consultation, and the slogan "Say No To No Say".

Despite the success of this slogan and the campaign which accompanied it, the bursting of the bubble of support for Labour once the GLC actually disappeared could have been predicted. For one thing, the campaign was designed to avoid, rather than to win support for, the "new left" issues of women, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians. Increasing respect for Ken Livingstone as a leader did not seem to increase respect for most of the things he stood for. As with Mrs Thatcher, his unwillingness to drop unpopular policies was seen as evidence of his determination, but this was a quality that was only appreciated when he had a job to do that people felt needed doing: defending Londoners' right to their own self-government. Once the job no longer needed doing, the unpopular policies were still unpopular. Any credit that Livingstone might have earned for progressive policies was soon swept away by the vicious press campaign against the "loony left" and the crass policies and presentation of some borough councils.

Harris's qualitative research showed up another reason why the GLC effect disappeared so quickly. In July 1985, says Waller, "Londoners felt that the destruction of the GLC would be most felt through the effect on services, principally transport." As London Transport had already been annexed by central government in 1984, many people were clearly going to be pleasantly surprised by the smooth transition to the post-GLC world.

The third point is that the campaign against abolition succeeded in attracting floating and Alliance voters to the Labour Party as the standard-bearer of an effective opposition to the Conservatives. The Alliance vote in London was hit harder by the GLC effect than the Tory vote. This was the lesson that Bryan Gould and Peter Mandelson took to heart and Ken Livingstone didn't: that Labour could win over a broad swathe of anti-Thatcher opinion by playing to its strengths — its image as the "caring" party, in touch with ordinary people. Several London boroughs ignored this lesson, and their "crazy schemes" came to the fore after the GLC disappeared, along with its £14 million advertising budget. Floaters, Alliance voters and even some Labour supporters were quickly detached from the Labour-led anti-Thatcher coalition.

The last lesson is the potency of democratic themes: public opinion can be shifted far and fast by appeals to the "right to a say". If the Labour Party can take the lead on opposition to the poll tax, on the grounds that it charges for the right to vote, and campaign the way the GLC did, it could repeat the GLC's success of 1984-85. □

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Bandaging the NHS

The government refuses to meet the funding gap in the national health service and is encouraging talk of "alternative" means of funding. But* NEIL KINNOCK *warns that alternative funding means an alternative health service,. He details the immediate financial commitments the government should make to restore services and raise morale

THE £100 million dose was welcome — although after £13.3 million for storm damage and £10 million for Aids have been subtracted, it melts down to £77 million for the "protection of services". That is roughly half of the deficit which the health authorities will have unavoidably incurred by the end of this financial year. It is just a third of the £235 million extra which the National Association of Health Authorities has said is necessary simply to remove that deficit, sustain standards of treatment and fund necessary development.

Tragically, therefore, the extra £77 million will not be enough to ensure that significant numbers of wards and operating theatres are permanently reopened. There is no sign of the radical revision of the government's public expenditure plans for the next financial year which would recognise the full realities of pay awards, price increases and the obligations resulting from an ageing population. The deficits will therefore go on accumulating, repairs will still be deferred, developments shelved, facilities closed and staff reduced. The crisis will creep on.

The government should respond to those certainties, to the outrage expressed by health practitioners and to the anxieties felt by patients with funding that clears the deficit. Instead, they resort to the argument that demand for health care is "insatiable" and they are already doing all that can be done. It is a lame excuse. "Infinity" of demand for health care cannot justify the failure to wipe out a very precise hospital deficit this year or to prevent such a shortfall next year.

Closed wards, lost beds, idle operating theatres are not infinite. They are all too definite. And while the demand for health care in general might be "infinite", the need for acute treatment is not. As the doctors repeatedly testify, it is measurable and predictable. And it is not being met.

The government's refusal to close the funding gap cannot be because of a shortage of resources when it so freely advertises the possibility of a £3,000 million income tax cut. If the Prime Minister has, as she claims, "cured" the "British disease", surely the means exist to do much more to combat physical and mental disease. The reason that she won't is not financial. It is philosophical.

The crisis that has accumulated through years of underfunding is now being used to create uncertainty and anxiety and consequently to promote the idea — and, indeed, to insist upon the practice — that the NHS must look for "alternative" means of financing. John Moore has briefed newspapers with his view that the public debate on the NHS encourages ideas on funding previously regarded as politically untenable. And if the public and the professionals are not vigilant the stratagem could work.

The demand for health care is special. For people in pain or great anxiety it understandably becomes obsessional. Sufferers who have modest financial means and who would not normally think of "going private" eventually use savings or raise loans to buy private treatment when the NHS waiting list is too long to bear. The Prime Minister knows that. And she knows that the particular can be turned into the general.

> ***While the demand for health care in general might be infinite, the need for acute treatment is not. It is measurable and predictable. And it is not being met***

Urgency of need is pressing. It outweighs the principles of a comprehensive, nationally funded, nationally provided public service, free at time of use. Indeed, when public funding falls so short of so much private need it is small wonder that the active, good-hearted instinct to help quickly and get the scanner or the research or the fare and fees for operations abroad is greater than the slogging pragmatism operating those principles.

Chipping in

So we all chip in. Whether we are citizens sponsoring fun runs or nurses and doctors working overtime, we know that now we are not raising money or cutting costs to provide the "extras" to care, but actually funding basic services. Still — because we know that it is a life or death, pain or peace necessity — we all have and will put our fingers in the dyke. That form of plumbing is all right as long as help is coming. But it isn't. As a matter of fact and government policy, help is going in the opposite direction.

Renting of laboratories, hiring of beds, extensive use of agencies are all commonplace despite the losses and costs that occur. The goverment urges that hospital foyers be turned into shopping precincts, not as a handy facility for patients and visitors, but to fund treatment — despite the fact that the result will be a puny and scattered £70 million in three years.

Competitive tendering for cleaning, catering, laundry and other services is hailed by the government as the great "resource-releasing moneysaver", despite the fact that the *British Medical Journal* registered the evidence of many who work in and use the health service last week: "Virtually every hospital is dirty and many are filthy . . . many hospitals are unpainted, unrepaired and unmaintained. Privatisation may have saved money but it has often made standards worse."

Increased dental and optical testing charges are levied, despite the fact that, as even Tory MPs recognise, reluctance or inability to pay means that preventable diseases go undetected, and the costs — especially among the elderly — are later paid in blindness, in pain and greater bills for providing acute treatment.

The deficiencies of all these systems are obvious. Consultants acknowledge that the charity-financed facilities, creditable though they may be, "disguise the true needs of the NHS". In a health service which is proud to have the lowest administrative costs of any comparable country managers and medical staffs insist that after years in which they have cut costs and raised funds, the government's assumption that another £150 million can be generated from "cost improvements" next year is banal and brutal.

As they lengthen waiting lists, prevent operations and postpone treatment, deficit-reducing ploys like cutting back on beds and getting rid of staff do reduce variable costs. But they don't reduce the fixed costs of running a hospital. In fact, they obviously increase unit costs. That system cannot satisfy any definition of efficiency. It certainly fails every test of morality.

More complex and comprehensive "alternatives" are now being offered. The idea of the "internal market" in the NHS is being fostered by the government. They seek to give the

new community

Journal of the Commission for Racial Equality

Vol. XIV, No. 1/2, 1987

This special double issue marks the Tenth Anniversary of the **CRE** and the Sixteenth Anniversary of ***NEW COMMUNITY*** itself. It has as its overall theme:

RACE AND ETHNIC RELATIONS IN BRITAIN: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Among the many contributors are: *Mark Bonham-Carter, Nadine Peppard, Alfred Jowett, David Lane, Peter Newsam, Anthony Lester QC, Bob Hepple, Zig Layton-Henry, Sally Tomlinson, Daniel Lawrence, Deborah Phillips, Simon Holdaway, Michael Banton, Malcolm Cross* and *John Rex.*

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impression that there are significant and under-used facilities in some parts of the country. But where spare capacity does exist, it is often because one or more of the components of care — beds, theatres, nurses or doctors — are not available to ensure full use.

And, even if an "internal market" were operated, the direction of patients to the "market-leading" hospitals and units would produce congestion, demand would overwhelm supply, fast turn-around would bring early discharge and post-operative problems which are both painful and very costly. The example of the international corporation, moving cash and inanimate goods and services between profit centres, is not a practical model for a health service where the product and ultimate measure of efficiency must be the health of living patients. That is not a matter of sentiment.

The idea of the "internal market", like other schemes from vouchers to lotteries, under-estimates the problem and sabotages the solution.

National disaster

The private sector does not delude itself that it could either replace or even do without the NHS. Dr Marvyn Goldberg, the chief executive of American Medical International, Britain's largest private hospital group, has said: "The NHS is vital. It is highly valued, deeply regarded and in many ways a very cost-effective service.To let it run down to the point where it cannot deliver the care needed would be a national disaster . . . Without the NHS we would all be in trouble."

Among those most in trouble would be mothers and children, the elderly, the chronically sick, the mentally and physically handicapped, medical and nursing trainees, and medical researchers.

And who would pay the large increases in contributions or fees which would follow from greater dependence on the private sector? Clearly not even the Prime Minister. She knows that the NHS has a precious place for even the most fanatical privateer: "the day may come when we have to have a very complicated operation I hope not. I hope it will never come. If it does then I am afraid one could not . . . perhaps . . . possibly bear that on private insurance."

The failure to provide against such risks is only one of the inherent shortcomings of a private insurance-based system. It would be immensely complicated to apply to the range of health needs and very costly to administer. Dependent — as it would have to be — on capacity to pay, it would unavoidably be selective, riddled with qualifications, exclusions and means-tests.

Comparisons with private life insurance are odious. The disparities which now exist in life insurance are tolerable because they do not determine quality of life,they reflect it.

One of the great strengths of the tax-financed NHS is that it is an "all-risks" insurance policy that costs user and potential user a fraction of what such comprehensive cover would cost if not provided universally, It simultaneously — despite the worst efforts of the government — permits planning and the setting and keeping of standards of professionalism and access which are essential.

A service using such large public funds and so central to public well-being must, of course, be subject to the demands of efficiency and

Contd on p.42

MEDIA

Scoop! Sensational media racism

Even the quality media, finds* NEIL BERRY, *get away with stereotypes when it comes to reporting on racial minorities

IN THE PAST few weeks two nasty, and related stories about Asians in Britian have surfaced in the mainstream media. The stories derived from sources — Radio 4 and the *Observer* — not normally associated with sensational or misleading reporting. All the same, both of them raise worrying questions — not just on their intrinsic reliability, but about the way in which even the "serious" media reports on Asians.

Radio 4's *Today* programme feature on "gender abortions" had the trappings of a well-executed scoop; and the report's claims that Asian and Arab families are bribing doctors to abort female foetuses (so as to avoid dowry payments) were immediately picked up by the national press. A pregnant Asian journalist, sent by *Today* on a dummy visit to Harley Street, found a doctor who was willing to arrange a £600 abortion for her — if an amniocentesis test revealed that she was carrying a female foetus. And there were professional testimonies, one of them from an Asian gynaecologist, that Asian families will pay a lot of money to induce doctors to abuse amniocentesis tests — which should be undertaken only to forecast the possibility of a defective foetus — and to carry out female foeticide.

> ***"To indicate that dowry violence and gender abortion are common features of Asian life in Britain is as crass as implying that child abuse is rampant among the white majority"***

Many listeners are bound to have concluded that "gender abortions" are readily contemplated by Asians; last week the *Spectator,* evidently taking its lead from the *Today* report, noted that such abortions have become "quite common".

Reporting just before Christmas on alleged violence against women whose dowries fail to satisfy their in-laws, the *Observer* also seemed to have homed in on a widespread abuse. Indeed, the paper claims to have uncovered a "major problem", hitherto kept secret, and particularly acute in London, Leicester and Birmingham. "Asian women," the *Observer's* reporters categorically declared, "are suffering threats, beatings and murder attempts by husbands and relatives in disputes over dowries." Graphic details were provided of the indignities endured by a few Asian women, and readers were informed that the *Observer* had presented a "dossier of cases" to Keith Vaz, the Labour MP for Leicester East. Only at the very end did the article mention Vaz's opinion that dowry violence occurs strictly in a minority of cases.

Neither the Radio 4 nor the *Observer* reports can be dismissed as concoctions. It is not in question that there is *some* evidence of gender abortions and dowry violence taking place in Britain. Instances of dowry violence may even have increased — as an Asian solicitor quoted by the *Observer* suggested — with the advent for many of economically hard times. But the point is that *Today* and the *Observer* drew sensational conclusions from what was really, contrary to first impressions, a limited amount of research.

To indicate that dowry violence and gender abortion are common features of Asian life in Britain is as crass as implying that child abuse is rampant among the white majority. Most Asians have as little experience of such things and are just as shocked by them as anybody else. So far as abortion is concerned, the unsensational truth is that there are thousands of Asians in this country who would not know how to go about seeking one — even if they could afford it. The *Today* programme was unthinkingly endorsing the myth that Asians are uniformly wealthy — and not just monied but corrupt. The subtle racism inherent in sending a pregnant Asian woman to test the venality of a Harley Street doctor is easily overlooked at first glance. A less prejudiced, wider-ranging investigation into Harley Street abortions might have revealed a complex phenomenon — one which could as well be understood in class as in racial terms.

Strenuously investigative journalism, however, appears to have gone out of fashion, if it ever was in fashion in relation to Asians — or indeed to any of Britain's minorities. By insinuating that cruel and primitive customs are an integral part of Asian culture, *Today* and the *Observer* typified a long-standing resistance to balanced and conscientious coverage of the affairs of British Asians which is by no means confined to the ill-natured tabloids. Asians are characteristically depicted in terms of caricature and stereotype. One day they are millionaires with a superhuman capacity for work and apparent immunity to normal emotions; on other — rarer — days they are helpless victims of domestic violence or racial attack. Missing is any sense that, whatever their religious or cultural background, the majority are just part of ordinary struggling humanity.

An Asian thoughtfully observed to me the other day that journalists in this country — who after all reflect as much as shape public opinion — treat Asians as British *Sahibs* did "the natives". Often their attitude is aloof, patronising, wilfully ill-informed. Many think that by getting on the phone to an Asian newspaper, or by having a word with a community leader, while working on a story, they have got the goods on the Asian community. To British journalists and public alike, Asians, it appears, are still objects variously of contempt, fantasy, fear and mistrust. □

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Spies, fraudsters — or René's private army?

Frank Larsen was last heard of on 19 November as he was summarily deported from the country — protesting to the last that he was a British spy being put out in the cold. It seemed like the final twist in a Byzantine saga involving the shady world of Intelligence, and the even shadier world of mercenaries and freelances. It wasn't, quite.
JOLYON JENKINS ***investigates.***
Additional reporting by Rob Edwards

LARSEN HAD BEEN charged, together with three other men, with conspiring to kidnap London-based members of the African National Congress. In October the charges were, without explanation, suddenly dropped during the committal stage of the trial. This led to allegations that the men really *had* been working for MI5 or MI6 and that the government was unwilling to see its dirty linen washed in public. Larsen, the police discovered, was really a Norweigan conman called Viggo Oerbak, and an illegal immigrant.

In the days that followed the dropping of the case, the newspapers enjoyed themselves enormously, putting forward various and conflicting theories on who was working for whom. Much of it was speculation, but the theory that gained most support, particularly in the *Independent* and *Sunday Times*, was that the entire operation had been masterminded by the South African government. And the aim was not actually to abduct the ANC representatives, but to curry favour with the autocratic Marxist leader of the Seychelles, Albert René.

Now the *New Statesman* has obtained a mass of documents, including the plans for the alleged kidnap plot, other papers and letters found in Larsen's house (among which were, inexplicably, large quantities of Masonic literature), copies of diaries kept by the defendants, and transcripts of their police interrogations. Together they suggest that Larsen and the three others were probably *not* working for the British government; but that they may have been working directly for Albert René. We can also reveal that since Larsen was deported, one of the defendants and his barrister have been conducting clandestine business of their own, and that this lawyer's conduct of the case has led to an irreparable split in his legal practice.

Plot unravels

The plot started to unravel on 9 July last year, when three policemen arrested Frank Larsen in the lavatories of the Regents Palace Hotel, Piccadilly.

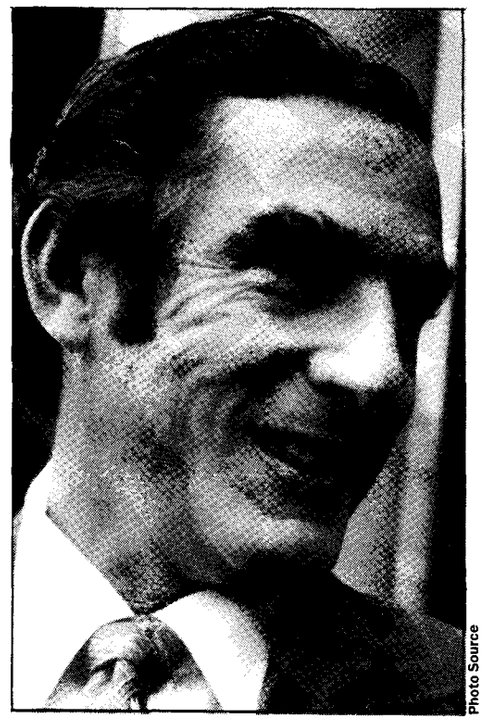
Photo Source

President René — Botha's communist friend in the Indian Ocean

(The police appear to have been on routine homosexual harassment duties.) Larsen showed them a forged Ministry of Defence identity card. They took him in nonetheless. In the following days they searched his rented house in Aldershot and removed thousands of documents (of which what we have is a small proportion), and arrested three other men. They were:

☐ John Larsen, who claimed to be Frank Larsen's son, though he is probably a Danish citizen called Hans Christian Dahl. (They refused to have a DNA "genetic fingerprinting" test carried out.) He has now left the country.

☐ Jonathan Wheatley, a former paratrooper who was dishonourably discharged from the Army shortly after the Falklands war and later recruited by Larsen.

☐ Evan Dennis Evans, a former MI6 agent who had worked in Rhodesia and now runs a sub post office in North Wales.

What the papers seemed to indicate was *two* separate plots. First, the alleged kidnap plan. Home addresses of the ANC members were all listed; there were also what looked like plans to recruit personnel for the operation, to arrange safe houses, false arrest warrants, and weapons. According to the notes, South Africa would be the source for much of the equipment. The four defendants have denied responsibility for the papers, saying that they were planted.

The *second* — and far more detailed — plot was apparently to overthrow the Seychelles government of Albert René. Frank Larsen told the police during his interrogation that the plan, codenamed "Operation Layout", was not for an armed invasion, but simply to contribute what he called "a back up team for a lawful government when we were invited back to take control of the island". The police were sceptical, pointing out that the plans refer to assault teams, frogmen, pilots, signallers, booby traps, mines, mortars, night goggles, respirators, jamming equipment — all culminating in an attack on René's HQ.

Larsen secured the active involvement of several prominent Seychelles exiles in this country, who were under the impression that the British government was behind the plan. He also brought in Evans who he met, as if by accident, in a shop in Charing Cross. Evans has told several newspapers, and us last week, that he had very little involvement with the Seychelles plan, and believes Larsen was simply using his MI6 credentials to give the appearance of British involvement. Nonetheless he was sufficiently engaged to put forward the name of a former colleague from the Rhodesian Selous Scouts. In a memo, he wrote that the man "was a first class professional" who "would be interested in the project".

Linking the two plots was the shadowy figure of Johann Neimoller, a South African special forces officer, who knew Dennis Evans from their days together in Rhodesia. Neimoller appeared on Evans' doorstep in October 1986, ostensibly seeking help in his clothing export company. Evans, for reasons which are unclear, introduced Neimoller to Frank Larsen, though there is evidence that they already knew each other. Larsen, in turn, introduced Neimoller to Seychelles exiles involved in the "Layout" plan. Larsen, Neimoller and Wheatley, according to the documents, became involved in the ANC plan. Neimoller stayed for ten days with one of the exiles, Pierre Ferrari. When he went, Ferrari found poisons and anaesthetics left behind. Another exile found a pistol in a suitcase.

One possible theory is that Neimoller was provided by South Africa to help overthrow René. But although Pretoria backed the disastrous coup attempt led by "Mad" Mike Hoare in 1981 (which was rumbled when customs officers noticed a gun poking out of one of the mercenaries' bags), it now has no reason to want to change the Seychelles regime. René is a sort of communist, but he has recently been compliant towards South Africa — allowing it to use the islands for sanctions-busting. The theory which has now gained most credence is that Neimoller had been trying to plant incriminating evidence on the Seychelles exiles as

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part of a larger plan to make it look as if they had been planning to kidnap the ANC. The police would then have been tipped off, the exiles arrested, and René would have been happy. The leader of one wing of the opposition, Gerard Hoarau, was shot dead in London in November 1985; now, the other wing would be in prison. According to this account, the Seychelles invasion plot was a sham.

This theory, although probably the best available, is not without difficulties. There is no evidence that the Seychellois had been induced to take any part at all in the ANC plot. Minutes of the meetings show Larsen and Neimoller running the show. It is hard to see how the conspirators could have come up with a plausible motive to "plant" on the exiles. The theory also suffers from grandiosity in that it tries to link the two plots, even though they possibly had nothing to do with each other.

When the case came to trial, Larsen claimed to have been working for the British government all along. At this stage his barrister, one Benjamin Conlon, becomes a crucial figure. Conlon wrote a confidential memo to the magistrate hearing the committal, claiming that Larsen "has for some years worked for the British Secret Service" and that "he had a high ranking military status".

After the case was dropped, the government made moves to deport Larsen. Conlon (in his capacity of American attorney-at-law) wrote to John Laws, the senior Treasury Counsel, threatening to reveal to the press details of recent MI5 operations, including names of agents, if the deportation went ahead. Wheatley swore an affidavit that he "had been working for the British Security Service in an undercover capacity", claiming he had worked for the government during the miners' strike.

All these claims to connections with British intelligence have remarkably little substance. Larsen has been deported but, despite Conlon's threat, no details of MI5 operations have been leaked. Wheatley and Larsen both dropped names liberally, but revealed nothing that was not in *Spycatcher*. John Larsen told the police during his interrogation that he met Mrs Thatcher during the miners' strike, but we have established that one of Wheatley's first actions after his release was to telephone hotels in Yorkshire to find out where she had stayed during the strike — which strongly suggests he was trying to back up the story with bogus evidence.

Conlon himself has told his colleagues that his instructions have been coming from "national and allied security services". He has said that "it was clear that there existed a feud within the services. Two factions are involved here, one which supported the Thatcher ideals and the other camp being more concerned with the State. My three clients were in the latter camp". He has also said that he expects a knighthood for his work.

Whoever his instructions have been coming from, he has invested disproportionate quantities of time and energy in dealing with a case which is technically over. He has taken on almost no legal briefs since the case, despite being short of money and being the subject of a defended bankruptcy law-suit. He has also employed Jonathan Wheatley, who now calls himself "John Allon", as a "bodyguard/paralegal", and together they are working on another unconnected case. This singular behaviour, together with other technical matters about the way the Larsen case was handled, have caused a split in Conlon's chambers between him and the rest: they have passed a vote of no confidence in him, and he has complained to the Bar Council about them.

Conlon and his clients' insistence that they have been working for Allied intelligence undermine those very claims. Real spies who are put out in the cold go quietly, hoping to get back later. A barrister receiving secret instructions from the intelligence services would not normally commit the fact to paper or discuss it with colleagues. This week Conlon refused to talk to the *New Statesman*, and put the phone down.

Larsen seems only to have decided to claim British intelligence connections fairly late on in the proceedings. Transcripts of his police interrogation show him keener to buy his freedom in exchange for intelligence (which is what may in fact have happened). He offered information on ex-Falklands weapons hidden in plastic bags in the Basingstoke canal, and on "gun-running to Eire, using Norwegian boats".

Moreover, some of Larsen's desperate attempts to connect himself with the British government are proveably untrue. He claimed that a woman who visited him while he was in an immigration detention centre was a high ranking military police officer at Aldershot — but we have established that she is in fact a nurse with whom he had become friendly. He also tried to establish a connection with a Major-General in the Marines, Henry La Roche Beverley. In 1986 Beverley wrote to a photographer in Aldershot, enquiring after an old photograph of a cricket team. Larsen somehow acquired the letter and replied to Beverley in friendly terms. Beverley politely wrote and thanked him. Last week he told us: "I suspect he wanted to have the letter so he could show people he was on good terms with a General."

Seychelles connection

So the claims of British intelligence involvement ring hollow. There is much better evidence that the Seychelles government was closely connected with the operation, with or without South African help. One of Wheatley's early activities on being released was to get a bundle of papers back to the Seychelles, using the diplomatic bag. A note scribbled to himself on 29 October reads "Phone High Commission. Check if Robert is there, if not who has replaced him. If not there give second copy (unopened) to be sent ASP to Albert".

"Robert" is Robert Delpech, the Seychelles High Commissioner in London. "Albert" is presumably Albert René. Papers *were* sent to the High Commission at the start of November. On 5 November, Conlon despatched two junior members of his chambers to see Delpech to check that the papers had arrived, and to arrange a meeting between the two men. Delpech phoned Rene to get permission to see Conlon the next day.

The meeting went ahead. Conlon travelled to Harrow on the Hill underground station, changing trains, cloak-and-dagger fashion, to avoid being followed. Delpech was there. They walked together for several minutes. There was a third meeting between the two men at the Seychelles High Commission at which more papers were handed over.

What was in the packages? It is likely that they were extracts from the "committal bundle" of papers that were seized by the police from Larsen's house — but later returned to the defendants' lawyers — including those relating to "Operation Layout". Among them are lists of police officers in the Seychelles allegedly loyal to the regime and those who are not to be trusted; and other intelligence which would be of interest to René.

I met Delpech last week to question him about all this. It was a bizarre encounter. Delpech refused to allow the meeting to be taperecorded, but announced at the end that he had secretly done so himself. He first of all categorically denied that he had met any of Larsen's representatives, then that he had not met Conlon; then that he might have done without being introduced; then admitted that he had met Conlon's juniors, and finally seemed to accept that he *had* met Conlon. He said that he was unaware of the contents of any papers sent to René, and claimed he never concerned himself with security matters. He mentioned his resentment at having been "carpeted" by the Foreign Office when it was discovered that Gerard Hoarau's telephone had been tapped before his assassination.

Two days before the clandestine meeting, Conlon told colleagues that in return for his services during the case, the British/American governments had offered him the post of Attorney-General in the Seychelles, and that he had accepted.

Frank Larsen, according to the account he gave the police, had two meetings with Delpech after Hoarau's assassination. He claimed that they had met in the Cardinal pub in Victoria. He said that Delpech had told him about events in the few days before Hoarau was murdered. Larsen's account went into great detail and took several hours to tell. On a second occasion, said Larsen, he swept Delpech's office for bugs. Delpech, however, categorically denies having ever met Larsen.

In another unexplained strand, Jonathan Wheatley, with at least four other people (whose names are known to us), was involved in an attempt to raise money at the end of 1986 for an alleged "building project" in the Seychelles. The plan was to acquire £4,370 million. A London financial investment consultant was approached. He spent several months trying to raise £50m from a Swiss bank, with securities to be held as collateral. In the end the deal fell through because, as the consultant explained to us last week, the team was never able to produce the securities. The bulk of the money may have been intended for a Seychelles building project, but diaries kept by Wheatley show that some was earmarked for buying unspecified "equipment" from Sri Lanka. The deal, the diary says, was cleared with the Sri Lankan Minister for National Security, and Wheatley was in touch throughout December 1986 with a Sri Lankan woman in this country.

If René *was* using Larsen and his friends to collect intelligence on the Seychelles exiles, then it would not be the first time he has hired freelances to carry out his foreign policy in Britain. For several years he used a British private detective who went to the Seychelles shortly before Gerard Hoarau's murder and has not returned to Britain since. Scotland Yard would dearly like to question him. Were Larsen and friends his replacements? □

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Gerrit Fokkema

BICENTENARY

It's my party and I'll cry if I want to

As most Australians prepare for an orgy of celebration of 200 years of white settlement, hundreds of thousands of Aborigines and a large and growing number of whites are questioning what there is to celebrate. The significance of the round number of elapsed years appears to be greater than any particular deed associated with 1988. **DAVID LANGSAM** ***reports***

ALONG WITH THE search for national identity there is a whole range of problems, both practical and philosophic, facing Australia's 16 million people.

Clearly the most important thing is that there is to be no celebration of the 40,000 (possibly 200,000) years of Aboriginal settlement and until Australia comes to terms with its aboriginality, it is unlikely to resolve its identity crisis. Among other things the country also has to find an economic path to set its direction for the future.

The only single nation continent in the world has no national borders, is at the one time a working person's paradise, and at the same time is not living up to the hopes and aspirations of its large body of conscientious citizens.

In Australia's mixed economy, the rich become millionaires while one in five children lives below the poverty line. But before critics gloat at the exposé of the uppity colony, it should be made clear that few countries even aspire to the real level of equality in Australia, despite its shortcomings.

Above: two whites of British descent in Alice Springs. Now in the minority

Titles that artificially put children of inherited wealth and friends of the government above others have been abolished and will never return. Forelock tugging is not an Australian attribute. While governments in Britain and the United States dismantle welfare systems and attack trade unions, Australia's Labor government has built a national health service, trade union membership is above 50 per cent of the workforce and the union movement is a respectable, credible force. British secrecy is in stark contrast to the passage of Freedom of Information legislation in Australia. A public outcry ended the Hawke government's attempt to issue identity cards, but Hawke was first elected on his (fulfilled) promise to save Tasmanian wilderness from development.

But it is necessary to expose the hypocrisy of Australian egalitarianism. All mates under the sun, for all but 15 of the past 200 years the country had a White Australia Policy which excluded non-European migrants. The exclusion of Australia's

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own people, the Aboriginals, remains the worst duplicity.

Next Tuesday night on ITV, journalist John Pilger will give breathtaking evidence of the destruction of the Aboriginals: "nigger hunts" in Queensland as recently as the 1960s, the rewriting of the history of massacres, protracted guerrilla wars by Aboriginal peoples, the rape of the women and the theft of their children.

Sydney-born Pilger says Australians have to give up the role of innocent bystanders. "Australia is not an innocent country," says Pilger. "It's a very guilty country and this year is the greatest opportunity to heal the wounds as it promised to do. The reneging [of Prime Minister Bob Hawke's 1983 promise to right the wrongs of the past] is an historic betrayal."

Pilger says most Australians support Aboriginal Land Rights, but because of misleading headlines in the Murdoch-owned national newspaper *The Australian*, they don't know they are in the majority. He attacks the Hawke government for not countering the Murdoch claims. We shall return to Mr Hawke shortly.

Australia is no longer an inherently racist nation, although it was until very recently and pockets of entrenched bigotry remain, particularly in rural areas. Its racism was handed down by the British colonisers and has only been whittled away since the mass migration of non-British Europeans. While some migrants may hold prejudices, it is difficult to be explicitly racist in the world's most multicultural society. Racist and sexist epithets, while heard, are disapproved of socially.

Defining Australians

Last year, for the first time, non-British migrants and their descendants outnumbered British migrants and their descendants. Melbourne, the capital of Victoria, is the second largest Greek city in the world after Athens, and has twice as many Italians as Greeks. There is no longer any shame in being non-British as there was until 1972 when Gough Whitlam, the first Labor Prime Minister in 23 years, defined an Australian as "anyone who lives or works in Australia".

Australia's leading radical black activist, Gary Foley, born on a reserve in Northern New South Wales, says Melbourne is Australia's least racist city. Unfortunately, Victoria's progressive centre left Labor government does not run the whole country. The Premier, John Cain, leads a well-managed state with humane social policies. Yet in Victoria, where the government has held lengthy consultations, Aborigines are still waiting for Land Rights.

On two specific parcels of land, at Cain's request, the Federal government last year used legislative powers given under a 1967 referendum to override the conservative, Liberal Party-dominated, State upper house, which was blocking the release of land.

That same power would have allowed either the previous Liberal Fraser or current Hawke governments similarly to intervene in Queensland or Western Australia, but they haven't — a litmus test which identifies the gulf between words and deeds of the Hawke government. Uniform national Land Rights legislation, with the right to veto mining and exploration, as well as acknowledgement of Aboriginal prior ownership, *within* the constitution, are really the basic minima for beginning the long road to compensation for 200 years of murder, rape, persecution and pillage.

> ***'National Land Rights legislation, with a veto on mining and exploration, within the constitution are the minima for beginning the long road to compensation for 200 years of murder, rape, persecution and pillage'***

Aboriginal "reserves" were sited by the colonisers on the least arable land and the ensuing poverty and misery blamed on the victims. When mining companies discovered resources under the reserves, scant regard was given to the residents. Following the description of Aborigines as "heathen" by Christian fundamentalist Hugh Morgan, head of the giant Western Mining company, the gifted columnist Patrick Cook drew a cartoon of two Aborigines discussing the issue. One says to the other, "If he was a real Christian, he would have poisoned our flour years ago." It is heart-breakingly true.

With their economic and social base confiscated, Aboriginal society crumbled. Squatters slaughtered the native wildlife and cleared the land for grazing. When Aborigines killed a sheep for food, they were either shot on the spot or tried under English law for stock theft and then hanged. White-introduced alcohol remains a major problem.

In Tasmania, the British rampaged across the island killing every Aborigine they found. Despite the death of Trucanini, the last full-blooded Tasmanian Aborigine, 112 years ago, about 2000 Aborigines remain in Tasmania. In 1986 they were still waiting for funds for a burial place for their dead.

Aboriginal blood

Land Rights opponents use a Catch 22 argument based on the claimants' percentage of Aboriginal blood. If, they say, part-Aborigines can be given territory that whites have to buy, what will stop whites claiming they are Aborigines and getting property for free? In fact the claiming process requires a group claim from people recognised by the Aboriginal community as Aborigines. And claiming to be an Aborigine in rural Australia is like boasting of being a Jew in Nazi Germany. But, say the white opponents magnanimously, if they really are full-bloods, then they can claim land. (After the last 200 years, there are not many eligible applicants.)

Prime Minister Hawke promised in 1983 to right the wrongs of the past. At the same time, he is highly attuned to the needs of industrialists and the business community, which generally opposes Land Rights.

The former head of Australia's trade union movement, Hawke boasts of his friendship with a host of multi-millionaires, including Murdoch partner and transport mogul, Sir Peter Abeles, whose TNT lorries drove through Wapping picket lines. Hawke has been called Mr 78 Percent, the public opinion poll measure of his personal popularity at its 1983 peak. The rating has fluctuated, but in recent days has returned to near 60 per cent. If democracy is giving people what they want, then Hawke represents the aspirations of most Australians.

However, the entire left of the Labor Party (about 40 per cent of the membership) strongly disapproves of Hawke's sellouts on Aborigines and uranium mining and his dumping of New Zealand over the ANZUS alliance.

The Labor left enters 1988 with mixed feelings — an active partner in a government that has been re-elected twice, ending the conservative claim to be the "natural" party of government.

In what could be a most inspired piece of machiavellian strategy, the leader of the left, Gerry Hand, a long-time campaigner for justice for Aborigines, has been appointed Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. The toughest portfolio, Aboriginal Affairs has broken each successive incumbent who has tried to effect change. Those who didn't even try are condemned by history.

In 1988 Australia is celebrating that history, so this is judgement year for Ministers for Aboriginal Affairs. It is the sort of job that will keep a noisy left-wing back bencher well-occupied.

Hand has the support of the left and a degree of confidence from Aborigines, but told the *New Statesman* that he could not promise legislation in 1988. "My job is to try to get people talking to each other, to get an understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and to reach a compact or a treaty. If you understand something clearly you are more likely to agree."

Asked directly if he will be the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs who implements uniform national land rights legislation with an Aboriginal veto over mining and exploration, Hand refuses to comment, obscurely saying, "We've got a few ideas."

He implies that much public relations has to be done before Australia is ready for the big step of admitting and correcting its past mistakes. Yet if Hand wants to sleep at night and retain leadership of the left, he needs to get a major score on the board.

When Aboriginal Australians are treated as equals in their own land and police officers no longer advocate genocide, Australians will have much to be proud of. The country's freedom, democracy and contempt for inefficient bureaucracy have contributed to laying the foundations for a robust and healthy nation. I fear Hand's reticence, but in the end it may be Hawke's ego that brings about land rights legislation.

Sensitive to world opinion, Hawke is going to take a battering at this birthday party. Gary Foley says Aborigines will cause untold damage, not through violence, but through their very survival. "After the 26th [January], journalists are going to be looking for something else to report on," says Foley. "All we have to do then is show them where we live." □

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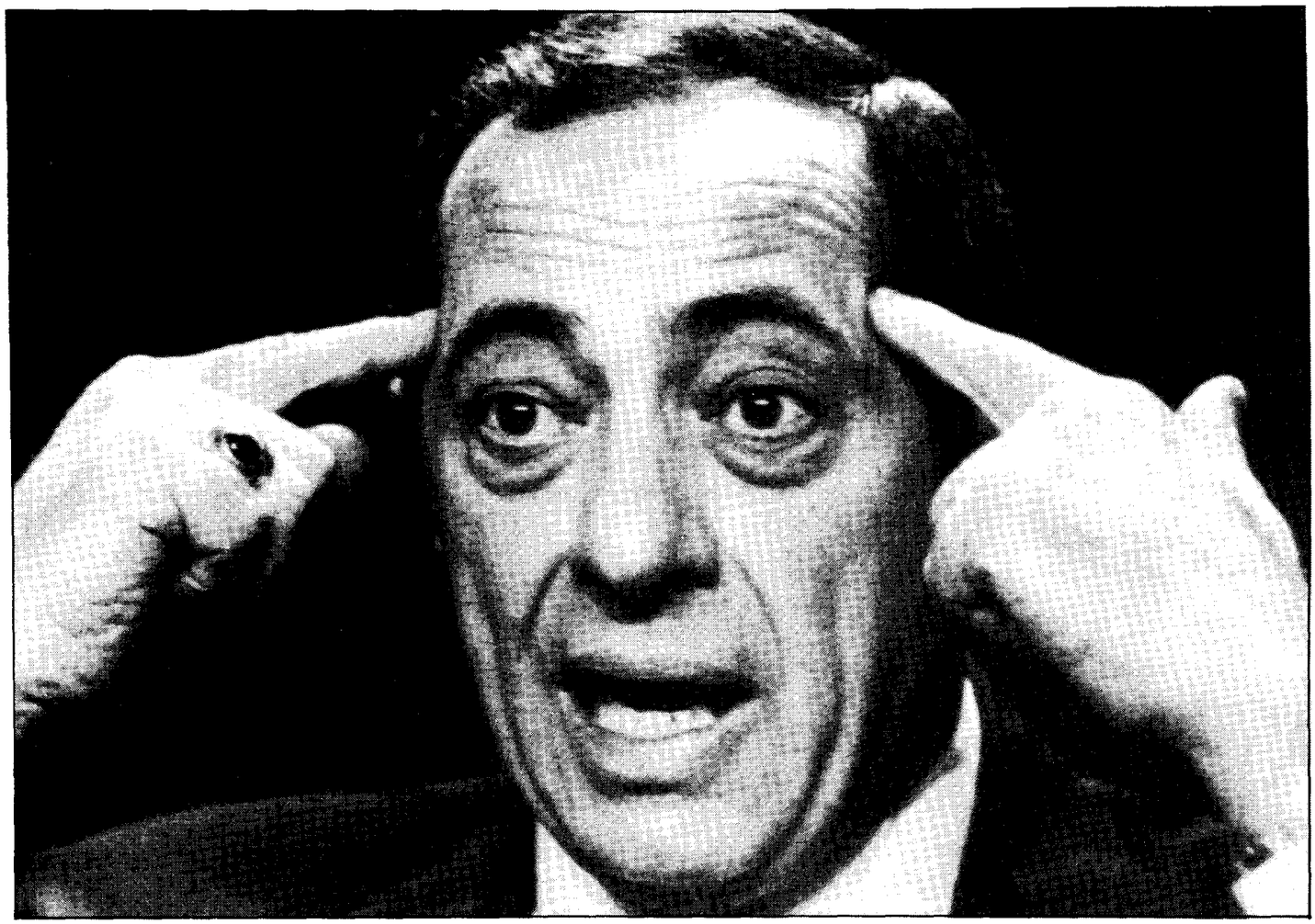

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AFTER REAGAN

Is Mario Cuomo il uomo?

"How would you advise Cuomo to run for president?" a Democratic Party adviser was asked. "Just like this." Mario Cuomo's non-candidacy is the political striptease of the century — not only would he be the Democrats' best hope of beating the Republicans next year, but he's also a liberal. He says he won't run, but **ELGY GILLESPIE** ***prays he might just give in at the last minute***

New York

"IN *WAITING FOR GODOT* the whole point is that Godot never turns up," New York state governor Mario Cuomo gleefully and crisply replies, when taunted about the Doonesbury newspaper cartoon in which he has been starring offstage as Godot. In *Waiting for Mario* the teasing theme of satirist Garry Trudeau was: will he, won't he, will Cuomo join the race for US president this election year?

It was yet another try from a lovesick and desperate liberal at getting the avowed 1988 non-candidate to join the campaign trail, before the Democrats blow it for another four years. There is little doubt that Cuomo could win the nomination if he wanted to, and he already towers above the current seven, largely despised, Democratic candidates. That isn't the question. Nor is it whether he'll run: he keeps on saying no. The question is whether he means no, and when — if ever — they are going to stop asking him.

Ask your governor

Since last winter the governor has been doing a phone-in show on a New York public radio station called "Ask Your Governor". He used the 19 February 1987 programme to make the very first denial that he was in the race, instantly becoming a non-running frontrunner, and he has been making the same denial on the air regularly since. At the same time, he has been exhibiting signs of careful statesmanship: boning up his weak foreign policy, talking detente and arms control and undergoing gruelling public scrutiny on Capitol Hill before party policymakers and politicians. The man who boasted he did not know Buffalo from Beirut also blitzed Moscow in a short but crammed visit last September, when a busload of Italian tourists mystified Russians by shouting "Mario! Mario!" as he emerged with wife Mathilda from his stretch Zil motorcade. It was only his second trip abroad (the first was to Rome). He even visited a Russian Orthodox church, dined with refuseniks and met Sakharov — none of which goes down that big in the sleepy little New York state capital of Albany. "Is Mario running yet?" was Fidel Castro's first question to a senator visiting Havana recently. So far, there is no sign of a campaign fund at work, or a network for collecting delegates and signatures. But when asked how he would advise Cuomo to run for the next election, one adviser for the Democrats said: "Just like this."

Last time "Ask Your Governor" was aired, Gary Hart was just back in the race — and the clamour for Cuomo was even louder. Cuomo, let it be said, was the only politician — with the ambivalent addition of Jesse Jackson — who defended Gary Hart's right to his own "monkey

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business" and demand to be judged "on the issues alone". So inevitably there are questions from callers on the show about Gary Hart, who stole Cuomo's campaign for Mondale in New Hampshire last time around in 1984. Caller after caller expressed disgust at the current candidates and the distressing disarray of the Democrats, especially now that Hart is back in.

"You, you're really articulate and savvy and you're the real Democrat . . . we need a true frontrunner who can really win," says a caller named Ann, clearly working her way towards saying that it is the governor's duty to come to the aid of the party. It is a view shared by the top Democrats, who spent time twisting Franklin Delano Cuomo's arms all last year.

Right now in the studio, the governor is not physically in his shirt-sleeves — though often he is. But mentally, he has the knack of getting down and dirty on this kind of public spat better than most deejays, as well as handling vast crowds. When the woman says "You are savvy and articulate" he looks across at me and winks broadly, as if to say "oh yeah?" Finally, mercifully, he cuts her off, to spare her from embarrassment. Look, he says, he was not surprised when Hart re-entered. And frankly, he adds, he doesn't see himself as superior or in any way better than the other candidates. This is obviously false modesty. A dog could see he is superior.

Tantalising striptease

It has become the political striptease of the century, daily more tantalising as a fresh candidate drops out or — doomsday for Democrat committee chair Paul Kirk — the vengeful, obsessed Gary Hart re-enters. All year the pack journalists have badgered vows not to run out of Cuomo, and to a lesser extent out of other noncandidates, senators Sam Nunn and Bill Bradley. At first the question — phased a zillion different ways to trap him — really infuriated Cuomo. Then, after Hart's withdrawal and the non-emergence of a clear frontrunner among the "seven dwarfs", and the possibility Democrat party hacks might indeed broker their own candidate at the party convention in Atlanta next July, the question teased. Cuomo decided to tease back. He has deliberately left a door open, by not ruling out a last-minute draft if there is a Jackson-Hart tie. Perhaps he is just enjoying a flirtation with the sometimes antagonistic press.

But again and again, till blue in the face, he has denied that he is not running now because of rumours of his Italian-style connections. At least one head rolled when the source of these rumours was pinned to another senator's aide. In fury Cuomo told the *New York Times* that these stories about his father-in-law Charles Haffa (mugged some years ago), his wife's cousin in Sicily (recently shot) and his campaign manager son Andrew (a nice boy says his father, but somehow often near trouble) are proven to be groundless. What is more, they are the very things that might make him run — just to show 'em. Just because he is the son of immigrant Italians who ran a grocery in the Bronx, people say he must have owed his rise to a deal with the broken-nosed boys. Why must he automatically get tarred with the 'M' word as his staff call it (meaning 'M' for you-know-who)?

His long, mobile face with the sensual mouth and clever black eyes like calamata olives sets itself back into a serious, very serious expression as the callers ask about 1988. Suddenly it is the face of the most intellectual orator in the Democrats, the one who writes his diary for over half an hour every day. He likes to make jokes about being ugly. In fact he is a handsome 55-year-old-six-footer.

> ***"To a voter Cuomo looks like a man who doesn't want to be president and who unfortunately happens to be Italian . . . The question isn't whether he'll run: he keeps saying no. The question is whether he means no"***

But Catholic? Italian? You bet. The key difference between Cuomo's ethnicity, which informs so much of his hymning of the Democrat past and his rhetoric about "society as family", and Jesse Jackson with his rainbow coalition, is that to a voter Jackson looks like a black man who really badly wants to be president. Cuomo looks like a man who doesn't want to be president and who unfortunately happens to be Italian. There are no words to express the feelings of deep gloom on the part of most Democrats when faced with a Jackson-Hart tie, and 3 per cent surveyed have said they would switch to Cuomo right away if he entered, which is about the same level of support as Gary Hart currently enjoys.

But Catholic? Italian?

"I think the key to his character is his Catholicism," says former aide Peter Quinn in *Time* magazine. In a long speech Cuomo made to his former college Notre Dame — where he was a baseball star — he outlined the reasons he would not oppose abortion, after being challenged by New York's conservative Cardinal John O'Connor. Cuomo, still a practising Catholic "by birth, then by choice and now by love", neatly evaded a try at catching him out by expounding a new policy called "Catholic realism" — in effect, a churchy pragmatism which said nothing would stop women from seeking abortions, so they should be clean and legal and available, whatever he might personally feel as a communicant.

His other major preoccupations were balancing the state budget, stamping out adult illiteracy (23 million Americans — 10 per cent — cannot read or write and his own mother was illiterate), the reform of state education, and the eradication of social disadvantage among immigrants. It is an all-

The 1988 race

Democrats running ("The Seven Dwarfs")

Gary Hart: Runaway frontrunner having survived his dramatic re-entry after the *Monkey Business* affair with Donna Rice put him out; 1972 McGovern campaign manager; "mad-eyed ski-instructor" (Hunter Thompson)

Paul Simon: Less well-known than the singer, Illinois senator who was leading a weak field until Hart's return; oldest of the seven (58); wants to tax the rich; bow tie, big ears, tall leggy wife called Jean

Michael Dukakis: Competent technocrat governor of Massachusetts; liberal welfare champion who has succeeded against unemployment

Jesse Jackson: Black Reverend founder of the Rainbow Coalition; holds no political office

Al Gore: Senator son of senator Al Gore senior, both of Tennessee; centrist fighting Jackson for Southern "Super Tuesday" primaries; wife Tipper (against porn in rock lyrics) his biggest liability

Bruce Babbitt: Governor of Republican Arizona with a worked-out fiscal policy to wipe out the deficit; listing badly

Richard Gephardt: Protectionist Missouri Congressperson who took Edward Kennedy's advice to heart: "Buy a good road map of Iowa" (scene of first trial of strength on 8 February); but wilted in the heat of Hart's re-entry

Popperfoto

Democrats not running yet

Mario Cuomo: Il uomo (above, outside the White House)

Bill "Tax Reform" Bradley: Tall, bright, popular New Jersey senator

Sam Nunn: Bespectacled conservative Georgia senator; armed forces reformer

Joseph Biden: Delaware senator riding high as chair of the judiciary committee hearings on Judge Bork's Supreme Court nomination until caught lifting Neil Kinnock's "thousand generations" election speech

Republicans

A two-person race between Vice President **George Bush** and Senate Minority Leader **Bob Dole**, with Kansas senator Dole the clear favourite ●

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American, all-New York, liberal Democrat platform and he is liberal on arms control too. It won him the biggest landslide black, Jewish, Irish and Italian vote in the last state election since Grover Cleveland. That was after having lost in 1980 (after 6 years as governor) for his anti-capital punishment stance. But he's not illiberal. His big "all liberal" stance is to favour means-testing for social welfare.

"We're being premature making these judgements of disaster about the 1988 race," says Mario to a caller as a couple of camera crews bounce around us, hoping in vain to be the first to break the story of his entry. No, he does not approve of brokering candidates and he has no intention of changing his mind. In fluent Spanish he tells a hispanic caller "no" again later, between a homily to the Brooklyn Hassidics about their to-be-repaired bridge and a black woman's lament about not getting anti-smoking nicorette tablets over the counter. (More winks to this reporter.)

"It's just much, much, much too soon to say," he says of the prospects for 1988. "If you'd made a judgement on Jimmy Carter in 1975, he'd be nowhere. Yet in 1976 he became the clear triumphant winner and went on to become president. In 1983 when Hart got into the race you'd have said 'This guy's going nowhere,' yet in 1984 he was the big star and did so well he began this year in first position. You have an extremely talented field with proven winners . . ."

Carefully, Cuomo goes on to praise each and every member of the "seven dwarfs", listing the triumphs of Mike Dukakis and Paul Simon and Bruce Babbitt. "And everyone knows what Jesse Jackson is capable of," he caps, ambiguously. Oh, why is it that Ann the caller and every single newshound in the studio feels in their gut that he is flirting, that he is a true Italian when it comes to flirting, and that he is going exactly the right way about getting himself elected?

> ***"He has given the Democrats back their soul . . . Is the long wait for Mario really a form of extended foreplay . . . or due to some darker secret?"***

"So it's just too early, we're being premature and negative about this field. And moreover . . ." he carries on, "thank you very much for referring to me as an important Democrat. But I really don't think I have that kind of significance. I get a lot of publicity because I'm the governor of New York, which is the media capital of the country. But I certainly don't have any influence on the primaries."

Oh no? Well, we'll see about that. From the Democrat voters and the party bosses there is a deep yearning, an unrequited hunger for a real leader, the kind that can fill their leadership vacuum. As political commentator William Schneider once said, he has given the Democrats back their soul. Is the long wait for Mario really a form of extended foreplay, designed to evade the costs and pratfalls now being suffered by the candidates already in? Or is it, as so many people insinuate on both sides, due to some darker secret?

Cuomo continues calmly to claim it is neither. It is because nobody sane would want to run for president, he hints — as he ought to know, having helped run the 1980 campaign for Jimmy Carter and Fritz Mondale's tough New Hampshire race against Gary Hart last time around. Maybe he's right. Maybe you can achieve more as a governor, not as a president, and maybe he is right to stick to his nice house in the state capital of Albany and his home life and his relatively peaceful nights. He likes a lot of things that presidents never get to do, from sitting next to the driver in the Chevrolet to winking at reporters.

As we left the studio — the governor now talking about subway fares — I said to one of his aides that I hadn't expected the aides to like him — few politicians' aides do like their bosses. "Well, after all," the aide said, laughing, "he is an Italian." They believe him when he says "no"; but they still do not rule out a doomsday draft scenario. Come April, after the New York primary, or even just after Atlanta's "Super Tuesday" on 8 March — that is when Cuomo may finally give in. And then we may find out more about him. □

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ESSAY

Who's afraid of Frederick Forsyth?

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Since 1945, right-wing thrillers have constantly warned not only that the Russians are coming, but that they're already here — in Neil Kinnock's Labour Party, for example. Silly, yes, says* JOAN SMITH, *but your politics may die while you're laughing

A TORY PARTY political broadcast at the last election opened with footage from the second world war accompanied by a voice-over which made much of Britain's devotion to the defence of freedom. It followed up with images from the pit strike, which characterised picketing miners as a rabble; simultaneously, the same smooth voice spoke over the violent scenes, denouncing Marxism as the foreign, imported ideology which lay behind the strike.

Whether Marxism, formulated for the most part in Kentish Town, is any more foreign than those ideologies to which the present government owes much of its thinking — Hayek, for instance — is a question which, naturally enough, was left unaddressed.

The thrust of the broadcast was both simple and effective: a foreign power had been seeking to undermine British democracy through the mechanism of the "enemy within".

No one who has even a passing acquaintance with postwar popular culture in Britain and the United States need ask who that enemy is. Both thriller writers and the popular press have attributed just about every manifestation of opposition in recent British history — particularly the resurgence of CND, the miners' strike, and the Greenham women — to a single ultimate source: Russia, President Reagan's "evil empire".

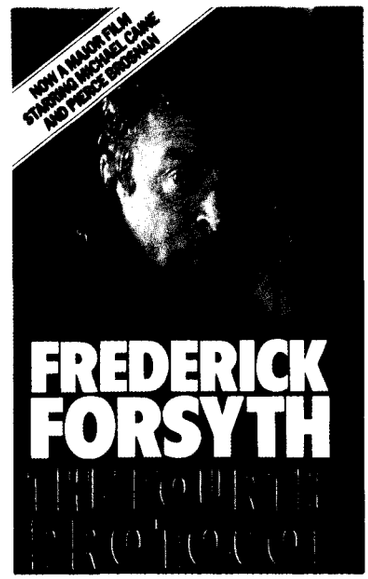
A more interesting question, though rarely addressed, is why this should be. Why is it not sufficient to accept internal dissent as a necessary feature of democracy, instead of constantly seeking shadowy foreign manipulators in the background?

There's nothing new about undercover enemy agents. Agatha Christie, whose books have sold over 400 million copies worldwide, referred to them in her autobiography. She wrote:

> All that alters is the enemy. There is an international gang à la Moriarty — provided first by the Germans, the "Huns" of the first war; then the Communists, who in turn were succeeded by the Fascists. We have the Russians, we have the Chinese, we go back to the international gang again, and the Master Criminal wanting world supremacy is always with us.

She's right — up to a point. Until the second world war, thriller writers made the most of a cast of interchangeable villains which included the Germans, the Russians, and the Jews (not to mention combinations thereof). Distasteful and racist though much of this writing was, it could at least be argued that there was a perverse even-handedness about it — the group that was "out" one year might well have faded into the background the next. What Christie failed to grasp was the change that followed the end of the 1939-45 war; the metamorphosis of her list of potential enemies into the notion of *the* enemy — a shift brought about by Britain's possession of the atom bomb.

Since 1945, the public has been treated to a constant diet of right-wing thrillers whose thesis is, in essence, that the Russians are coming. A very popular variant is that they are already here — undermining the security service, providing clandestine funds for opposition groups, working inside the highest echelons of the British establishment. So persistent are these themes that the casual reader might be lured into thinking that the thriller is intrinsically a right-wing form, which it isn't. (The left-wing thriller writer does, however, face a more difficult task because she or he is writing against entrenched stereotypes.)



***Now we know why Mrs Thatcher loves thrillers. She's actually re-read* The Fourth Protocol**

Nine invasions

What is particularly striking about these novels is the extent to which they reflect the prevailing Atlanticist perspective. By contrast, thriller writers of the early 1900s frequently characterised themselves as lone voices whose self-imposed task was to stir an unresponsive government into action against an enemy threat. Indeed, it could be argued that books like *The Riddle of the Sands*, Erskine Childers's anti-German novel of 1903, far from simply fictionalising a genuine threat, were at least partly responsible for creating a climate which made an otherwise avoidable conflict more likely.

Childers's novel presents itself as a desperate attempt by two patriotic Englishmen, Carruthers and Davies, to warn the British public of an impending German invasion. The two have already passed on their information to the British government. Nothing has been done, due to "the pitiful inadequacy of their own secret service" — shades of Peter Wright — and they have decided to appeal to the nation direct. The book ends with a rhetorical flourish:

> Is it not becoming patent that the time has come for training all Englishmen systematically either for the sea or for the rifle?

It was an immediate bestseller, in spite of Childers's insistence on stuffing it with technical information, of interest only to dedicated sailors, about North Sea tides (the book is accompanied by navigation charts for places like East Friesland). Other writers took up the theme, clearly miffed by the refusal of the British government to take the supposed threat seriously; one of them was the bellicose Field Marshal Roberts, who secretly collaborated with the popular novelist William Le Queux to produce *The Invasion of 1910*. This scaremongering work predicted that Britain would be able to stave off invasion, only at the cost of ceding Denmark and Holland to the territorial ambitions of the Kaiser.

P. G. Wodehouse was so irked by this spate of mischief-making that he wrote *The Swoop* or *How Clarence Saved England*, a spoof in which no fewer than nine foreign armies invade Britain in complete ignorance of each other — the Germans in Essex, the Young Turks in Scarborough, the Moroccans in Brighton, and so on.

By the time Agatha Christie published her first novel, *The Mysterious Affair At Styles*, in 1920, the political scene had been transformed. With the Germans defeated and their economy in ruins, the favourite enemy of the moment was the Russians, even though it is probable that the struggling Bolshevik régime was — whatever its rhetoric — in even less of a position to launch a bid for world domination than the Germans 20 years before. Nevertheless the young novelist on the threshold of her long career looked out on a disintegrating world with fear and incomprehension. These painful feelings explain Christie's tendency to see conspiracies round every corner, particularly in her thrillers. Half the books she wrote in the 1920s fall into this category, and they make dismal reading. Christie thrashes around to identify the people responsible for all these unwelcome social upheavals. They also — such is the illusion of control enjoyed by the novelist — demonstrate the inevitable triumph of good (the old rightwing establishment and the pre-war social order) over evil (socialism, communism, any manifestation of change or progress).

In *The Secret Adversary* (1922), two of Christie's least endearing characters, a couple of amateur detectives called Tommy and Tuppence, foil a Russian plot to bring about revolution in Britain. This is how Christie sets the scene:

> Sensational hints of a Labour *coup d'état* were freely reported. The Government said nothing. It knew and was prepared. There were rumours of dissension among the Labour leaders. They were not of one mind. The more far-seeing among them realised that what they proposed might well be a death-blow to the England that at heart they loved.

Manipulating the Labour leaders, of course, are the nasty old Bolsheviks — "Bolshevist gold is pouring into this country for the specific purpose of procuring a Revolution". But then, in a fit of lunatic jingoism, prompted by the belief that nothing ever happens in the world without a Brit at the controls, Christie articulates a conspiracy theory so bizarre it takes the breath away. Here is Mr Carter of MI5 explaining the true situation to our two detectives:

> The Bolshevists are behind the labour unrest — but this man is *behind the Bolshevists*.

"This man" turns out to be none other than Mr Brown, a shadowy Englishman who is using the Russians to gain "supreme power for himself". Or, as Christie puts it elsewhere:

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> Lenin and Trotsky were mere puppets whose every action was dictated by another's brain.

Christie's novels from this period are casually anti-semitic. Other English writers of the early years of this century went further and saw a Jewish conspiracy as Britain's real enemy. Possibly the worst offender was the novelist John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir. In his most famous novel, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1916), a mysterious American turns up at the hero's flat in Langham Place and enlists his help in preventing a political assassination which is about to take place in London. The American explains that a Jewish-anarchist conspiracy is at work, setting countries like Russia and Germany against each other. This, he says, is how it works:

> The Jew is everywhere, but you have to go far down the backstairs to find him. Take any big Teutonic business concern. If you have dealings with it the first man you meet is Prince *von un zu* Something, an elegant young man who talks Eton-and-Harrow English. But he cuts no ice. If your business is big, you get behind him and find a prognathous Westphalian with a retreating brow and the manners of a hog. He is the German businessman that gives your English papers the shakes. But if you're on the biggest kind of job and are bound to get to the real boss, ten to one you are brought up against a little white-faced Jew in a bath-chair with an eye like a rattlesnake. Yes, sir, he is the man who is ruling the world just now . . .

Britain's phallus

In 1945, just before the Americans used nuclear weapons on Japan, a group of concerned scientists warned that to do so without first informing the Soviet Union would lead inevitably to an arms race. They were ignored, and the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki signalled the division of the world between a new club of super (ie atomic) powers and a clutch of also-rans. The determination of postwar British governments, Labour and Conservative, to stay in the superpower club, regardless of cost, has been justified only by the fiction that Britain faces a constant, unchanging, ruthless enemy of unprecedented stature — an evil empire whose territorial ambitions and firepower are so vast that they can be countered only by ceaseless vigilance and the expenditure of stupendous sums of money on arms, particularly nuclear arms.

Britain's otherwise inevitable decline from superpower status has been avoided — insofar as the strategy has been successful — solely by its possession of a weapon which trails the glamour of exclusivity. Priapus-like, Britain has attached a huge mechanical phallus to its shrinking body; no enemy, no erection, it's as simple as that.

Nuclearphilia has placed these governments in precisely the opposite position to those before the second world war. The threat to Britain from the USSR since 1945 is probably no more real than that from the Germans in 1903 or from the Russians in 1920; that is not the point. Thriller writers no longer play the role of Cassandra to a deaf establishment. Instead they've enjoyed a relationship of cosy unanimity with postwar governments when it comes to identifying and evaluating the threat to the British way of life. Just how deeply our culture has been penetrated by the notion that Soviet agents are everywhere is illustrated by a bizarre episode in the life of the Kray Twins; when Ronnie Kray suffered a bout of madness in 1958, he accused his brother Reggie of being "a dirty Russian spy" in disguise.

> ***'The prime minister, Rupert Higginson, is really Hitler's son, conceived when the Führer inpregnated his vegetarian cook in the Berlin bunker in 1945, and he's married to a woman controlled by the KGB'***
>
> — from *Prime Minister, Spy* by Michael Spicer

There is another important benefit for governments from this consensus. The virtually unchallenged claim that we are confronted by a devious, powerful enemy means that unwelcome internal developments — strikes, attempts to regulate the activity of the security service, opposition to nuclear weapons — can be stigmatised as foreign imports, the result of mischief-making by foreign *agents-provocateurs*. Thus there are said to be *Spetsnaz* agents among the Greenham women; support for Arthur Scargill during the miners' strike becomes not merely foolish, but unpatriotic. The claim that foreign subversion is at work is an invaluable rallying-point for governments who fear argument is about to fail, and thriller writers have played a key role in creating a climate in which the allegation can be made.

Their books reach millions of people; they are made into films and even, in the case of *The Fourth Protocol* by Frederick Forsyth, into computer games. The beauty of them is that, being fiction, they can go much, much further in making claims about enemy penetration than any government minister would ever dare. Their technique is simple: to blend a real fact with a new and sinister interpretation of a second fact in a way that equates the reality of the two.

The Fourth Protocol is probably the best example of this process at work. The novel is about a plot hatched in Moscow by the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, assisted by Kim Philby, to create a nuclear panic in Britain which will lead to the election of a Kinnock-led Labour Party committed to the removal of American bases. The chain of events leading to this outcome subtly interweaves real people and events — Ken Livingstone's leadership of the GLC, and the creation of Labour's electoral college — with Forsyth's own "facts", such as the murder of Hugh Gaitskell by the KGB. The effect is to blur the boundary between fact and fiction, so that readers are left with the impression that they have been reading about a genuine conspiracy; that impression remains as a reference point in the back of the mind, and comes into play when the *Sun* or the *Daily Mail* attacks Livingstone or Kinnock.

Another favourite means of dressing up fiction as fact is to imply inside knowledge on the part of the author. Forsyth does this in *The Fourth Protocol* by providing pages of detail about the organisation of and premises used by the security service, so much so that it sometimes reads more like a guide for new employees than a novel. Chapman Pincher (the author of half a dozen pedestrian thrillers as well as interminable non-fiction books about the security service) achieves the same effect in his novel *The Eye of the Tornado* (1976) by reeling off a list of unnamed inside sources:

> In making this work of fiction as true to life as possible the author is greatly indebted to senior officials, present and past, in the Defence Ministry, the Royal Navy, the Secret Intelligence Service, Scotland Yard, the Atomic Energy Authority, the US Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon.

Just in case anyone hasn't yet got the point about his novel being disguised fact, Pincher goes on to call the British prime minister Mrs Margaret Fletcher, while the American Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is one Fritz Bussinger ("short, stockily-built, with curly hair and not much neck"; he speaks "in the Teutonic accent he had been unable to discard since emigrating from Germany as a boy").

The plot of *The Eye of the Tornado* concerns an attempt by the IRA, assisted by the KGB (or "Klobber Great Britain" as one of the characters wittily renames it), to hijack a boat transporting Polaris warheads from Faslane to Portsmouth.

The plots of many thrillers are frequently as risible. Take *Prime Minister, Spy*, a breath-takingly bad novel by the Conservative MP, Michael Spicer. This farrago of nonsense, described on its dust-jacket as "frighteningly plausible", has as its hero one Rupert Higginson, on Old Wellingtonian who becomes prime minister after a spell in the Foreign Office. Higginson, it turns out, is really Hitler's son, conceived when the Führer impregnated his vegetarian cook in the Berlin Bunker in 1945; as if that were not implausible enough, Higginson is also married to a woman controlled by the KGB.

Silly, yes. But that should not blind anyone on the left to the baleful and cumulative effect of exposure to them. How many people, potential Labour voters, have read and absorbed these words in what purports to be a memo from Kim Philby in *The Fourth Protocol*?

> In summation, the entire Labour Party of Britain now belongs to the Hard Left, either directly, through Soft Left surrogates, through intimidated Centrists or at the holding of a fast emergency meeting of the appropriate committee; and yet neither the rank and file of the Party membership, nor of the unions, nor the media, nor the broad masses of the old Labour voters seem aware of it.

Forsyth's novel, though published in 1984, is set in 1987. Its bogus versimilitude is bolstered by the fact that it has Margaret Thatcher as prime minister and Neil Kinnock as Labour leader. But Forsyth made one serious error: he still has Andropov in power in the Soviet Union. Had Forsyth predicted the elevation of Gorbachev, he'd have found it far harder to persuade readers to swallow his conspiracy theories. It isn't only Mrs Thatcher who has been caught on the hop by *glasnost* and the INF treaty. How will thriller writers respond now that even Ronald Reagan has embraced the Russian bear? □

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ARTS

Happily married Michael Douglas begins to think he might have made a mistake by sharing sushi with Medusa-haired Glenn Close

CINEMA

Nightmare on Madison Avenue

Judith Williamson

Fatal Attraction, *released here this week, has taken the States by storm — but is it part of a hurricane that is devastating sexual tolerance?*

LAST YEAR I THOUGHT I had identified a new stereotype in American movies—the Single Working Woman. Frequently played by Debra Winger, this character is noted for being good at her job, neurotic about men, and having a bizarre assortment of food in her refrigerator (to which she often repairs at night).

She also tends to have that kind of permed-crinkly hair, a style that makes hair occupy a good deal of space, traditionally a sign of power. This is not an insignificant detail; when Debra Winger played the dying wife and mother in *Terms of Endearment* her hair hung right down flat like nature intended. Think about it.

Glenn Close, last seen with demurely swept-up hair in *Jagged Edge,* now reappears as an SWW much closer to the archetype, with snaky locks that give her the appearance of a Medusa. However, *Fatal Attraction* doesn't just feature Glenn Close as the classically screwed-up SWW. On a second level of signification—which relies, in a sort of domino effect, on the first—it features the SWW as the Aids virus. And if on the first level the movie is a kind of *9½ Weeks*-style sex drama (both are directed by Adrian Lyne) fitting into that genre of films about yuppy sex lives in Manhattan, on the second level it is quite clearly a horror film, with both structural and thematic links to the whole genre of "body-horror", explored most interestingly in a film like *The Fly.* Yet while Cronenberg uses the conventions of Horror in order to push our sympathies beyond their usual bounds—something I would argue is progressive—*Fatal Attraction* employs Horror in order to rein them back sharply within the tight corral of the nuclear family. These two films probably represent the most diametrically opposed responses to Aids we have yet seen in the cinema.

The generic link between them is far from spurious: in locating *Fatal Attraction* as a horror film I am not simply talking about its being frightening or its being "about Aids". Genre films usually have quite specific structures which vary very little no matter how different, superficially, the stories they hold together. There are also particular conventions regarding the way films within a particular genre are shot and edited. The *setting* for a film may belie the genre of its structure and shooting: for example, most critics identified the film *Outland* (1981) as a Western set in space, a sort of re-make of *High Noon* in sf-land with Gary Cooper replaced by Sean Connery. *Fatal Attraction* is fundamentally a horror film in yuppy-melodrama-land; its whole structure becomes blindingly clear once you realise that the part usually played by the Thing/the Blob/the Bug is played by the SWW.

It is impossible to pursue this analysis further without revealing parts of the plot, so people who like surprises should stop here and come back after seeing the film. Yet it has been so widely hyped that most people must know its story by now. Michael Douglas plays a "happily married" attorney, Dan Gallagher, who meets SWW publishing executive Alex Forrest (Close) over the sushi at a book launch and again at a business meeting on a weekend when his too-good-to-be-true wife Beth and cutesie-pie daughter Ellen are out of town.

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According to the publicity synopsis, Alex "seduces" Dan — in other words, they go out for dinner and end up in her bed, a "mistake" on his part which the film weakly psychologises by showing his impulse to make love with his wife in the previous scene thwarted by having to take the dog for its nightly shit on Manhattan's pavements.

Alex and Dan's sex sequence, true to form within the upwardly mobile city drama which I will from now on call *genre 1*, takes place in the kitchen and follows a tradition of cinematic fucking—the only appropriate word—launched by *Last Tango in Paris*. A closer analogy is with *9½ Weeks* which also links sex very strongly with both food and non-white ethnicity (after all, the white urban middle class' main taste of "otherness" is through cuisine). Whereas there the couple meet in a Chinese grocery and pursue their affair through increasingly funky "ethnic" venues of the city, here the lovers progress from sushi to a fashionable Latin disco in their quest for kicks. *Fatal Attraction* deals with its need to locate the Other in the heart of the city by placing the entrance to Alex's apartment on a street corner where funkiness takes the form of a Jarmanesque brazier and people carrying meat carcasses to and fro. This kind of stuff has already become part of an '80s iconography of urban decadence and taboo sexuality; meanwhile the Gallaghers move wholesomely upstate to the country and keep rabbits. (The fact that Alex virtually lives in an abattoir ought to have alerted us to what she might do with these).

This city/country, Bad/Good dichotomy is kept up relentlessly even in the names: Alex gets a man's name while nobody could have a more long-suffering name than Beth (c.f. *Little Women*). This very relentlessness should be a clue to its social importance: clearly, the SWW poses a major threat if the film must resort to making her *cook rabbits*. In story terms, the outcome of Alex and Dan's encounter is that she becomes pregnant, and pursues him with increasing obsessiveness to make him take some responsibility. Since on paper everything she says makes perfect sense, the film must carry its Good/Bad message by other means.

Within *genre 1* this works as a series of ads. Lyne came to movies from commercials and not only is the whole film a continuous ad for family life (or condoms, whichever way you look at it), its component scenes are actually identifiable as specific ad types. There is the underwear ad where we see how much Dan really fancies his wife. There is the "people like you" ad where the Gallaghers and their buddies go out bowling. There are the after-dinner coffee ads where their friends chat delightfully round the polished table. There is the "listening bank" ad where they paint their new home wearing dungarees and perched cutely on step-ladders. The only blight in this adland packed with more *things* than I want to see in a lifetime (perhaps it is a play on Goods) is the phone, Alex's initial means of infiltration, which the film places ominously in the corner of shots. Alex herself is allowed no friends, no parties, no bowling, no knick-knacks—visually humiliated by her consumer barrenness which, even in terms of *genre 1*, does not explain but rather confirms her weirdness.

Indeed, pyschologically nothing adds up. Quite early on in Alex's "pursuit" Dan says, "If you tell my wife I'll kill you." But if he has such a good marriage, why not just tell Beth himself? This key flaw in terms of *genre 1* is, however, essential to the functioning of *genre 2* because, if the underlying threat is infection, Dan's fear must simply be Alex/the virus reaching his wife and child. In a central scene, Dan comes home to find Alex *in his living room* talking to Beth, having answered the ad for their house. The shock effect of this scene is only explicable in terms of *genre 2*'s theme of contamination, for Alex does nothing to reveal her identity. She does, however, shake hands with the Gallaghers rather too lingeringly, precisely as if she were infecting them with some disease.

The threat of invasion which Alex represents is conveyed cinematically by a classic Horror convention—the hand-held camera circling the family house, giving us the point of view of the monster roaming menacingly outside. While the image of the single woman pressing her nose against the window of family life might evoke poignancy at her exclusion—as in the famous ending of *Stella Dallas*—the use of the horror film's point-of-view convention evokes something far more monstrous than the mere sight of a distraught woman with frizzy hair. In fact, it evokes no person or character at all, but rather the lurking-ness of threat itself, structured, conversely, as an *intrusion*.

The horror film can eschew the logic whereby a sexual encounter may result in disease. Images, as Freud said, can collapse linear reasoning—the person sexually encountered becomes the disease. And Horror, as a popular genre structure, functions as a discourse way beyond the world of film.

Fatal Attraction's opening here has been preceded by a phenomenal success in the USA, where box-office takings have been at record level. Such an unprecedented hit suggests that the fears mobilised by the film are widespread and deep, which makes the loathing it mobilises even more pernicious. This fear and loathing are part of the wider climate in which, for example, the government's "promotion of homosexuality" bill is being passed: and *Fatal Attraction* represents a milestone of intolerance on the rightward path down which we seem to race faster every day. □

THEATRE

For the grown-ups

Paul Allen

Love Off the Shelf
PHILIP NORMAN, A. K. GRANT and ROGER HALL
Nuffield Theatre, Southampton
The Cabinet Minister
ARTHUR WING PINERO *Royal Exchange, Manchester*
Henceforward . . .
ALAN AYCKBOURN *Stephen Joseph, Scarborough*

ONLY SIX DICK WHITTINGTONS this year in the regional theatres of Britain, compared with ten Cinderellas, 13 versions of Jack and the Beanstalk and 14 of Aladdin. Clearly the entrepreneur's route to fame and fortune via the city of London, despite having the best role for an actor sweating in an animal costume, is a less attractive fantasy than stumbling on treasure in a mountain cave or marrying into the Royal Family.

But enough. It's too short a step from here to seeing the chopping down of the Beanstalk (with a giant on it) as a metaphor for the ritual killing and/or castration of a universal father figure, and that way madness lies. Much better to concentrate on the psychologically simpler pantomimes for adults produced around this time of year.

A musical like **Love Off the Shelf** is just that. The man responsible for the book is the New Zealander Roger Hall, who had considerable success in the 1970s with a play called *Middle-Age Spread*. It got him compared to Alan Ayckbourn (having Richard Briers and Paul Eddington in the West End production must have helped) and his best joke this time comes in the programme note where he claims the influence of both Strindberg and Feydeau ("not as easy as it sounds")

His plot offers us an unsuccessful writer and his frustrated researcher simultaneously deciding to write Mills and Boon-style, bodice-heaving best-sellers. Not the least Ayckbourn-ish of his achievements is the ability to stage three stories at once.

He does well with the clichés of romantic fiction, which is also not as easy as it sounds (or as many lesser writers think). Most of the comedy in the show comes from actors caricaturing a narrative in which eyes smoulder, lips curl and nostrils flare (almost causing a painful fire on one hero's upper lip). Men are, conventionally, eight to ten years older than the women they are fated to fetch up with, and one arrogantly introduces himself as such. Another turns on his heel shouting: "I'm going to leave the room — without a word of explanation!" A heroine cries passionately: "I want to run my fingers through your" — appalled pause — "ruly hair."

There isn't very far to go with this pastiche comedy, or with the pastiche music of Philip Norman, but Justin Greene's production and a gloriously kitsch set by Sarah-Jane McClelland take it as far as it will go. So long as nobody thinks it is a great new musical destined for national success it seems Scrooge-like to point out its shortcomings — one of which is that Andrew Secombe, playing at least ten instant character roles, is the only performer I can remember two days later. But I enjoyed it.

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero was writing at around the same time as Oscar Wilde and Ibsen and sometimes, consciously or not, seems to be trying to enter the territory occupied by either or both. **The Cabinet Minister,** reportedly a hit in spite of the critics in London in 1885, has had no major production since — according to the Royal Exchange the problem being that it claims to be a farce but gets bogged down in things like character and moral dilemma.

It isn't really about a cabinet minister at all, but a skittish wife played by Susan Fleetwood with terrific energy and spirit and not quite total conviction. She falls into the clutches of a money-lender and will be ruined unless she introduces him and his sister to "society". The play is snobbish, anti-semitic and for my money grimly unfunny.

It has, however, a demonstrably worthwhile subject in the aristocracy's preoccupation with money and power to the exclusion of love,

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fellowship and morality. The blithe romantic sub-plots, Pinero makes clear, would be sacrificed at once on the altar of the self-interest of the powerful. Braham Murray's fluent and splendidly-frocked production if anything softens its insights, but the satire, if that's what it is, is never really there.

If you want to be a tortured Scandinavian realist and a brilliantly entertaining farceur at the same time you have to embrace two things: ruthless pursuit of the dramatic logic of your characters, however galling, and the paradox that to share joy with your audience you must at least raise the real possibility of despair. Pinero and Hall have some of Alan Ayckbourn's structural craft, shrewd observation of the middle classes and gift for comic situation. What neither writer shows is his readiness to turn over a stone and poke about among the disgusting things that lie underneath.

Henceforward . . . is revived in Scarborough this week prior to touring from Poland to Egypt for the British Council and then Hull to Bath in the spring, following its initial success last summer. It isn't Ayckbourn's masterpiece, but its exploration of the way the creative artist pillages the emotional lives of those near him is both funny and discomforting. Set slightly in the future when the further reaches of the Northern Line have become bandit country, it features a composer with a serious "block" who rediscovers himself — and sacrifices the happiness of himself and others — by exploiting an actress who turns up for a sort of job and unluckily takes a shine to him. It comments wryly on Ayckbourn's own child-like fascination with gadgets (robots and a synthesiser in this case) and its end is faintly shocking. But then so is the death of Giant Blunderbore if you're a Freudian. □

ART

Blessed are the poor

James Hall

Tony Bevan
ICA

AT A TIME when almost everyone is queuing up to fling the battered body of socialism into an unmarked grave (a disused mineshaft, perhaps), it has become increasingly difficult to find collective images of any sort that are both attractive and progressive. At one extreme we have nostalgic evocations of the good old days when industrial workers clubbed together like medieval artisans to weld their steel cathedrals; at the other, a deep suspicion of the feudal group-consciousness of the invincible Japanese. As these versions of collective endeavour have obvious defects, both right and left can often end up united in their preference for individual activity and initiative.

The preface to Tony Bevan's exhibition catalogue suggests that his paintings deal with the unadulterated individual: "Bevan's art . . . penetrates appearances, striking the heartland of our inner worlds . . . No unnecessary embellishments distract from the impact and directness of the sitter's gaze . . . The images, charged with a hypnotic calm, effect the viewer like visual mantras . . . His protagonists, existing in a no-man's-land of social alienation, represent present-day icons for living on the edge."

Tiger in a parka, or lamb to the slaughter? Tony Bevan's "Tender Posessions"

The question is whether these unembellished individuals offer any critique of society — or remain indifferent to it. Are they outcasts, or hermits? A vocabulary of icons and mantras suggests that the journey into "our inner worlds" is a mystical one, and far from regretting social alienation the mystic exploits it as a springboard for religious renunciation. Furthermore, "hypnotic calm" endows Bevan's dispossessed with a stoic sanctity and resignation that recalls Doré's Eastenders, or languid Pre-Raphaelite portraits.

Several of Bevan's titles directly concern religion — "Mother and Child", "Natural Mystic", "Portrait of a Martyr." "Prophet" depicts a man holding manacled hands up to his chin, while a pair of scissors floats unsupported behind his head. These are presumably a symbol of release, but if so, hanging in mid-air, they have been conjured up like a *deus ex machina*: freedom is here dependent on miraculous intervention rather than personal desire. The handcuffs, in any case, hardly seem an intolerable imposition — if anything they have conveniently brought the man's hands together into a comfortable pose that is virtually one of prayer.

Bevan's finest works are those in which symbolic objects have a dramatic involvement with the figure. "Throat" is a powerful and disturbing painting that revitalises one of the oldest religious symbols, that of Jacob's Ladder. Bevan's ladder, however, is lodged in the figure's throat, forcing his head up and back, and giving a superb sense of the price that has to be paid in attempting any kind of spiritual or imaginative ascent. Pushing his eyes and mind upwards, the ladder threatens to tear off the figure's head. This visionary dislocation leads not so much to painless revelation and renunciation, as to gurgling inarticulacy.

But this is one of the few works in the exhibition that shows something in the process of being articulated, and thus affirms the value of communication. Others are so hermetically sealed that the figures appear to have no desire to be expressive. "Burning Up", for example, shows a bowed figure with his hands over his face, painted in a smouldering red pigment. But is he burning with indignation, about to erupt, or on his knees praying, about to be born again? Unlike "Throat", the figure exists in complete isolation, from both the viewer and other objects. There is a renunciation of social relations here; no evidence, indeed, that they ever even existed. Bevan endows the event (or condition) with the aura of the miraculous: like the Burning Bush in the Wilderness, the figure has spontaneously combusted. There are no lessons to be learned here — no heating allowances to be claimed, no wreaths to be sent to Kings Cross.

"Tender Possessions" underlines Bevan's reluctance to commit himself to a convincing material world. The "tenderness" here is attributed to the scant possessions of a tramp: a handkerchief, a packet of cigarettes, as well as a cigarette that is being smoked. But the tramp's hands are a confused criss-cross of lines; there is little sense that he has a firm, solid grip. He does indeed gaze directly at us, but since the head is also fragmented, this time by a series of stripey black markings, the gaze is camouflaged and no longer penetrating. Perhaps these black markings on yellow and red imply a tigerish tenacity, but as they are arranged in a pattern that looks more like that of cigarette stubs, any ferocity fizzles out.

Perhaps the real tiger of this show is the boy in "Mother and Child" who glares at us, eyes burning bright. And yet even here, if the only crusaders are children (just as they are for Gilbert & George), dissent may appear as something rather juvenile (which no doubt it is for those looking back from the boardrooms of today to the classrooms of '68). Moreover, it is a small step from Christ-like children on mummy's knee to all those images of saintly innocence and vulnerability that we saw earlier — not so much tigers, as lambs to the slaughter.

Bevan can be a very exciting artist when his figures are active protagonists. But in so many of the paintings here, his "icons for living on the edge" are hermits finding solace in deprivation. He runs the risk, in this exhibition, of being an evangelical entrepreneur of poverty. □

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TELEVISION

Mean talking blues

Hugo Williams

A LOT OF RAIN around tomorrow. That rain moving off towards evening. Further north the day dawning quite bright with fog closing in somewhat later. That report by Michael Fish. This report by Michael Burke . . .

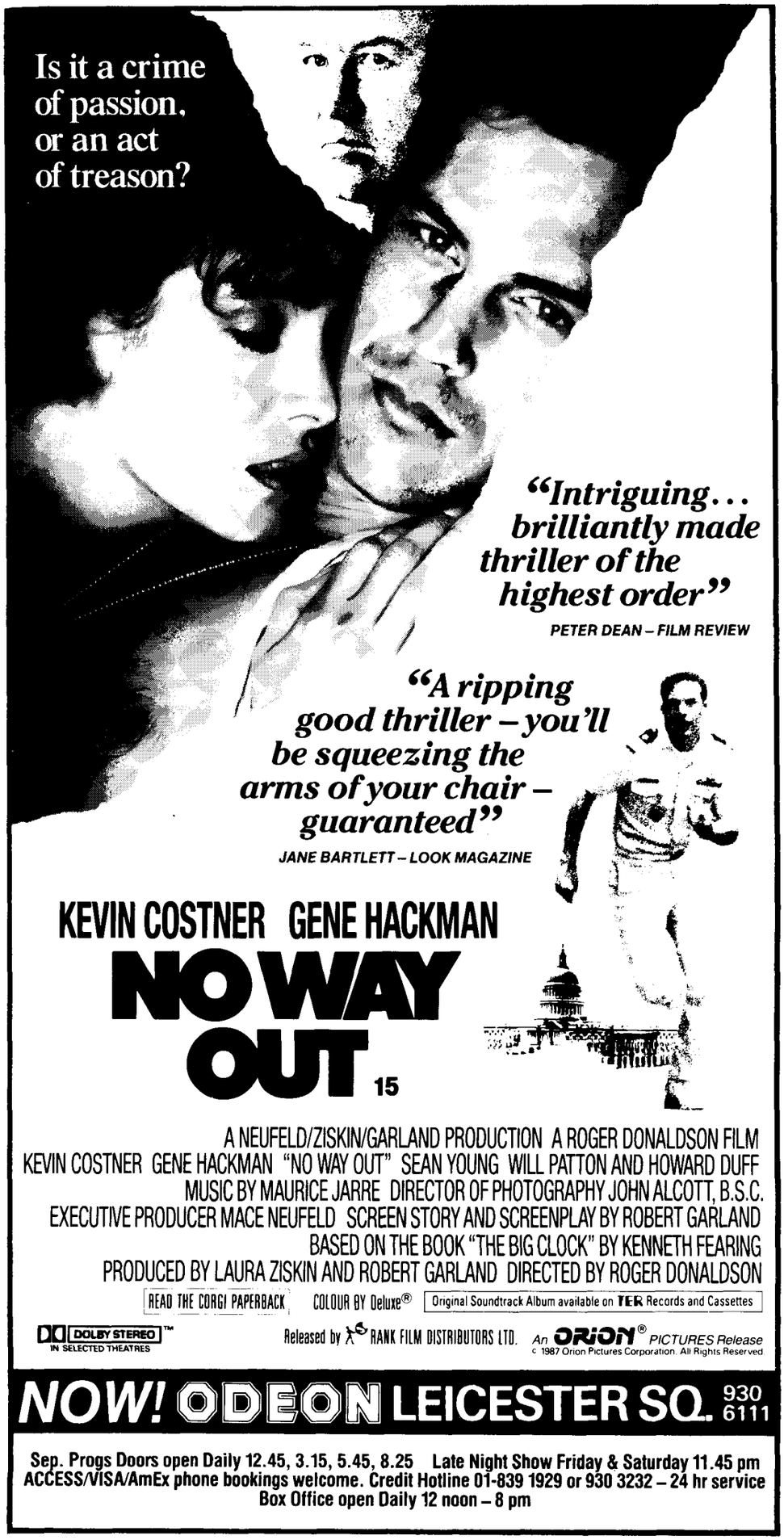
I wonder do they know they're doing it, these speakers of English for a living? I'm not against verblessness on principle, providing the speaker seems aware that the removal of the active part of a sentence is a stylistic perversion — but when its omission becomes a kind of absent-minded trademark one begins to wonder who gave these official users permission to pull the teeth of our poor old language. For surely, in terms of spoken English, verblessness is close to toothlessness? My own theory is that it's a method of not lying, a kind of creeping neutrality due to indifference. No matter what is being said, the viewer is invited to add "is" or "isn't", "are" or "aren't", "does" or "doesn't" according to taste or politics. This rather wild idea from Hugo Williams. Is.

Whether or not this is the case, it seems that all such ephemeral stuff, let alone more substantial reporting, has now got a better chance of surviving into the next century than the written variety, even between hard covers. We knew that early films made on nitrate stock — the earliest man-made plastic — turn to butter after 30 years or so, but according to *Evidence of Neglect* on **Timewatch** (BBC2, Wed.) books are now "burning up" in even less time. So if you are currently laying down your memoirs for the benefit of your grandchildren, forget it.

The problem is "embrittlement", a funny new word with an unfunny new meaning. It seems that the process by which modern paper is made contains the elements of its destruction. The acid used to break down the fibres into liquid remains in the finished product and keeps working. Despite the efforts of librarians to introduce long-lasting paper, the confidence of modern publishers in their productions is such that 90 per cent of books are still printed on acid paper programmed to self-destruct along with their authors.

The good news is that the acid is working like a powerful laxative on all those colour supplements hoarded with such anal enthusiasm over the years: they're as good as gone even now; you might as well sprinkle them on that herb garden they got you interested in. The bad news is that 80 million volumes are at risk worldwide and unlikely to be rescued by the limited funds available for transfer costs.

One of the dubious concepts behind the ghastly new Screen Two production **The Vision** (BBC2, Sun.) is that just as the ideological monopoly of the Holy Roman Empire was broken by the advent of printing, so another kind of monopoly is about to be re-imposed by cable television (of all mouldy old things). Lee Remick is the implausible brains behind this nit-witted scam. Dirk Bogart is the even more implausible cuddly family man she employs to anchor his multi-million-dollar hoax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KEVIN COSTNER GENE HACKMAN
NO WAY OUT
15
A NEUFELD/ZISKIN/GARLAND PRODUCTION A ROGER DONALDSON FILM
KEVIN COSTNER GENE HACKMAN "NO WAY OUT" SEAN YOUNG WILL PATTON AND HOWARD DUFF
MUSIC BY MAURICE JARRE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN ALCOTT, B.S.C.
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MACE NEUFELD SCREEN STORY AND SCREENPLAY BY ROBERT GARLAND
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financed by born-again hawks in America.

There's a lot of trite personal stuff for Dirk to act about: his wife's doubts, his daughter's suspicions, his mistress's suicide, his own eventual enlightenment. There is a particle of interest in the cultural clash of the two protagonists — "Am I embarrassing you?" "Mildly." "Mildly! Don't you ever feel strongly about anything?" — but the play as a whole has OD'd on plot: it's as shaky as a Heath Robinson contraption for picking up a sugar cube and has to talk fast and furiously to put up the flimsiest case for doing this. (The dialogue isn't bad.) The twist is that the moral re-armament-type programme foisted on Europe by "The People Channel" turns out to be a front for world domination (which is only a twist if you think that moral re-armament isn't the same thing). So yes, it's Mekon time again, with old Dirk crooking his left eyebrow at it all just like Dan Dare used to. He was writing a novel when the script came to his Paris hotel, but when he tried to tear it up as usual the largeness of his part caught his eye and his ego and he fell right into the trap. It goes to show that the person from Porlock comes in many disguises.

I had often wondered vaguely who Woody Guthrie was, apart from being an earlier, real-life version of Bob Dylan and Arlo Guthrie. Now, thanks to **Arena** (BBC2, Fri.) I know that he wrote and sang, with excellent diction, many blues-influenced political ballads know as "folk songs" whose irony has mostly disappeared over the years, notably "This Land is Your Land", his hymn to the Oklahoma dustbowl.

Whatever you think of these songs, his story is truly macabre. His father was moderately well-off until their house burnt down and his sister was burned to death. His mother died in a mental home of Huntingdon's Chorea and his father burned to death working under a car. The dust-storms of the '20s blew up and Woody left his wife and children and went hoboing for 25 years, hymning the Arkies and Okies enslaved to the apricot vines of southern California. His daughter was burned to death in their apartment. His son was killed in a car accident on a railroad. Another daughter died of Huntingdon's and another son was killed in another car accident. Then another daughter died of Huntingdon's. Woody himself survived the Normandy landings and spent the last 15 years of his life in hospital, unable to speak.

"I never saw Woody laugh or cry," recalled an army buddy. "The person was truly revolting — but we all put up with the shit of the personality to get to the diamonds that came out of his mouth - a scream or sneer of extraordinary power." I shall have to listen to him again. □

COMMENT

SAPPHO, SOCRATES, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Christopher Marlowe . . . Byron, Walt Whitman, Tchaikovsky, Proust, Diaghilev, Gertrude Stein . . . Such were the names that I used to chant, back in the 1960s, when external disapproval and internal doubts threatened totally to undermine that part of me which is lesbian. If so many hunters for Beauty and Truth had confronted their homosexuality (or was it the other way round?) then surely I couldn't be altogether crazy in trying to accommodate mine.

When British gay resistance was able to become more overt, assertive and organised — with the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 and the gay liberation movement of the early '70s — such mumbo-jumbo began to seem a little pathetic. Quite apart from the fact that it smelt of "personality cultism" and elitism, surely what was relevant about those artists was not so much the things they had achieved as the things that the law and society had *prevented* them from achieving — had stopped them saying, not only to gays but to anyone concerned with understanding.

Artists such as Sappho, who worked in societies where homosexual love and its expression weren't discouraged, suffered mainly from latterday critics' deliberate or ignorant distortions of their work. Visual artists and musicians, too, have mainly been vulnerable to critics' retrospective interference: their insistence that "A" should be read as "B", that white should be seen as black.

But verbal, "literal", artists — the poets, playwrights, biographers and novelists — were forced from the moment they conceived their work either to tackle their deepest concerns and most vivid experiences in code (Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Stein's *Tender Buttons*, Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting") or else to "heterosexualise" their feelings as a thief might disguise a racehorse as a hack in order to get it past customs (E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*).

There are those who believe that this need for obliqueness resulted in a less parochial, more powerful and impressive art. Certainly Forster's "gay" novel, the posthumously published *Maurice*, is banal in comparison with *A Passage to India*, *Howards End* or *A Room with a View* — while few would argue that Radclyffe Hall's sapphic tragedy *The Well of Loneliness* is a more effective or attractive novel than its playful, devious contemporary *Orlando*, through which Woolf sang her fascination with Vita Sackville-West.

But not only were Radclyffe Hall and Forster understandably nervous about their reputations, they must also have been quite cripplingly aware of their novels' responsibility as lonely, "representative" voices in the multi-accented, sophisticated, confident, heterosexual literary babble.

In the mere two decades since Britain relaxed its punitive opposition to voicing homosexual experience, this worry hasn't altogether died. As with blacks and feminists, out gay artists can be wary of creating "negative images", of feeding their enemies with ammunition, of alienating any sections of those people on whose support they most rely. Despite this handicap, the last 20 years has seen such a flowering of works dealing openly with homosexuality that it's hard to imagine the cultural garden without them. If people need reminding, a random scan picks up Fassbinder and Jarman in the cinema, Hockney in painting, Clark in dance, Gunn in poetry, Mapplethorpe in photographs and Baldwin, Walker and Duffy in fiction.

But now the government is crying, "Enough!" The notorious CLAWS 27 (this time, it's personal) of its Local Government Bill, which forbids local authorities to "promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality", will, besides its other abuses, freeze British culture with fear. Heaven knows what Margaret Hilda is thinking: she may see the clause (in fact, no. 28 now) as just another joke at local government's expense; she may be tossing a casual crumb to the queer-bashers on her back benches; or she may, like some Michael Ryan of Westminster, have become so accustomed to pulling the trigger that a moving pervert seems as good a target as another. Whatever her motives, the effects are likely to ripple out further than she's thought.

Work dealing openly with "gay issues" has in fact been vulnerable for quite some time. As Stuart Weir wrote in his leader last week, hostility towards homosexuals (perhaps only ever held at arm's length) has begun to lash back with a vengeance — and the arts were given firm notice of this fact in the summmer of 1987. When Gay Sweatshop took its play about Aids, *Compromised Immunity*, down to the Barnfield Theatre in Exeter, Devon County Council retaliated by witholding from Exeter and Devon Arts Centre a promised £10,000 grant-aid. As explained by the leader of the Tory group on Exeter City Council (who had actually wanted to punish the centre by suspending its funding altogether), the play had been "a threat to the health of the young people of Exeter". Despite protests from, among others, rate-paying members of *Compromised Immunity*'s audience, the council has stuck to its position — at which, remember, it arrived before there was even a law to back it up.

Should the bill become law — without amendments — it seems quite clear how it will be used by councils unsympathetic to freedom of expression; while even those who are *sort of* sympathetic are bound to become more nervous — to pre-censor stuff that they think might cause trouble, to lean towards the safe, to start pussyfooting. First to disappear from local-funded libraries, theatres, cinemas and galleries will certainly be such fringey things as publications from Onlywomen Press, the plays of Gay Sweatshop, the films of Jarman; but, as the parameters shift, it won't be long before the establishment — the novels of Baldwin and Walker, the films of Kureishi and Fassbinder, Hockney's paintings, Clark's ballets — start being bashed at the edges. And this isn't the end; we've become more knowing. No longer can there be that general assumption of public ignorance/innocence which allowed the works of Byron, Whitman or Proust to pass among us as "straight".

The point isn't simply that this new act of censorshop will discriminate against gays — though it will. It will drive every one of us further and further into a cultural Dark Ages: an age of suppressions, of fear, of intolerable lies.

Harriett Gilbert

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Sue Hillwood Harris

A foreign dignitary

Bernard Mac Laverty

THE VIEW FROM my window at the inn looked outward onto a small courtyard garden where everything seemed to be in bloom at once. The effect was quite, quite lovely. I watched a gardener stooping among the plants weeding, occasionally watering. Like everyone else here, he wore a buff coloured smock. He had a bag of maroon powder which he was trowelling into the soil around the roots of the more colourful species. It looked like the dried blood fertilizer I use in my own garden at home.

The man raised his head and when he saw me watching him smiled in a gap toothed manner. I nodded to him, not wanting to seem aloof, and staggered a little as I stepped back from the window. I had been warned about the period of adjustment one must go through at these high altitudes so I sat on a wicker chair until my dizziness passed.

Away from home like this I write a letter to my wife at least once a week, sometimes two if I find time heavy on my hands. The fact that they reach her months later, somtimes even after I have returned, is of little importance to me. After the day-long babble of strange tongues and dialects, in the quiet of my room I establish a communication of a sort with her. In some ways it is a similar activity to prayer and even though there is no hope of a reply I inquire after our daughter, Elgiva. She is a young woman who is ill with a skin complaint which makes her avoid the company of all but her closest female friends. Her condition, which is distressing to look upon, comes and goes for no apparent reason. The skin of her face and throat flares up into a dry angry redness in a patch whose edge is as irregular as a coastline. Her eyes become blood-shot and inflamed. Although she claims the condition is not painful it is pitiful for others to look upon. After her last attack my wife and I decided that it would be best to have all mirrors removed from Elgiva's rooms.

THE DIRECTOR OF PRISONS, Dak by name, joined me for dinner at the inn. He was a small man with features typical of the region — a large hooked nose, olive skin, an unshaven look. His command of my language was almost perfect. Like everyone else he wore the buff coloured robe. The only difference was that he had a medallion of some sort hanging on his chest.

He talked about each dish as it was presented, seeming particularly proud of one course containing sea fish. Coming from where I do this did not seem remarkable until I remembered that we were thousands of miles from any coast. And the transport, as I know to my cost, was lamentably slow. I cannot describe the discomfort I endured in getting to this place.

We were in an alcove slightly removed from the others who were eating and drinking. Dak pointed

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out various men of standing in the community but they all looked alike to me.

"It is a very popular place," he said. "All the more so when they know a foreign dignitary is here. They are curious to see you."

"Dignitary indeed! I am a civil servant — doing my job."

"A highly placed civil servant."

"One who carries out other's orders, nonetheless."

The Director of Prisons leaned towards me and whispered:

"It also means there will be entertainment."

A small band of musicians began to play while we were having dessert. The sound was thin and, to my ear, quite quite raucous but I applauded loudly when they finished.

It was only when a young girl came out into the space between the tables that I realized she was the sole representative of her sex in that place. She began to dance to the music and again Dak leaned across to me:

"This is for you."

She was very young, not long out of her childhood, and was dressed in a kind of long white folk costume. The dance consisted mostly of arm movements and girations of the hips — the feet moved but rarely. As she danced her eyes were downcast, which I found very alluring — fixed on the floor some inches in front of where I was sitting. Towards the end of the dance its character changed and the girl stood stock-still with her feet wide apart and began to ruck up her costume finger by finger. Past her shins, past knees, above her thighs until she revealed her tiny dark pubes and buttocks. The men applauded and banged the tables. The girl dropped her costume and bowed to me, then turned and left. Everyone was now looking at me. The Director said:

"She is yours for the night, if you wish it."

"No, really. It is kind of you to offer but I am a married man. And as you know, that is forbidden in our culture."

Dak raised an eyebrow and shrugged as if he didn't believe me.

"If it is disease which worries you I can assure you she is a virgin."

"No, really. Thankyou."

I offered to pay the girl some money lest she be disappointed at my refusal but Dak would not hear of it. He said that already she had been well rewarded.

I spent an uncomfortable night, sleeping only fitfully. I twisted and turned, thinking obsessively about the pleasures I could have had with the child dancer. I knew as a representative of my Government I could not be seen to accept her and yet the child was so attractive. Visions of her little rounded buttocks, her scant hair below the paleness of her belly kept me awake until dawn began to colour the room.

WHILE AT BREAKFAST a note was delivered to me from the Director of Prisons informing me that he would meet me before noon. I was amused at the mixture of formality and casualness of these people. When he arrived Dak bowed stiffly, yet apologised because we would have to walk to the prison. Someone had forgotten to arrange transport. I gathered my notebooks and papers and we set off together. As we walked the Director of Prisons insisted on carrying my briefcase.

"I hope you had a comfortable night," he said.

"Thank you, I did."

The pavements were in a state of poor repair and the roads rutted and broken. Many beggars sat at street corners but on seeing the man with the medallion did not put their hands out to us. They were emaciated, with the result that their eyes seemed to have grown larger. Our progress was watched by a slow turn of the head.

"Your Government have expressed great interest in our system," said the Director.

"Indeed. Your crime figures are quite, quite remarkable."

"The only real crimes are political. Everything else is . . . " he paused for a moment searching for the right word. "Venial? Misdemeanours which can be forgotten. The man who steals a cow is made to pay it, or its value, back; the murderer usually acts in the heat of the moment and we forgive him provided he makes a contribution to the family of the injured party. I will take you to the Courts tomorrow and you will see the process in action."

"I very much look forward to that."

We were moving into a better district. Laburnum trees with their delicate hanging blossoms lined the streets; we proceeded through a wide gateway into a garden of open aspect and thence towards a colonnaded walk.

"She was very young, not long out of her childhood, and was dressed in a kind of long white folk costume . . . As she danced her eyes were downcast, which I found very alluring"

"The philosophy of imprisonment is one that interests me," said the Director. "You can either punish, reform or protect. These are the options. There is no real need for the first one — punishment is very old fashioned. The state should be above such a childish reaction. Although I agree with one of your famous writers: 'The power of punishment is to silence, not confute.'"

I could not quite place the quotation so allowed him to continue.

"And on the matter of reform, Councillors of the Courts can dissuade most people from committing another crime. Your prisons, I believe, are overflowing with petty criminals who will never change. All this is a great drain on the resources of a State."

"But what if they offend repeatedly?"

"We have the ultimate threat of imprisonment. It is a great deterrent."

I was becoming a little breathless and presumed it was the effects of altitude. I tried to hide my panting and asked:

"How far is it to the prison?"

"This is it," he said. "We are in it."

I looked around. Walking through the low colonnade, the place reminded me of a monastery more than anything else. There were two gardeners, one raking the grass he had just scythed, the other working with a hoe in the flower-beds.

"No walls? Not even a gate?"

The Director smiled.

"No." He seemed to dismiss my incredulity because he went on, "The one class of offender we have found who is NOT open to reform is the political animal — the revolutionary. He is a zealot who is . . . " Again he seemed to be searching for a word " . . . incorrigible, whose sole aim is the overthrow of the whole system and, quite logically, the system needs to protect itself against him more than any other."

The scraping of our feet sounded in the arches of the cloistered walkway which met just above our heads. I was faintly aware of whispering or scuffling noises but did not want to be impolite and appear to be distracted from what my colleague was saying.

"If a tree is to be attacked by disease where would you afford the most protection? The branches, the bark or at its roots?"

"The roots, of course."

"Exactly. Then we are of like mind."

A perfume, as of night scented stock which I have growing in my garden at home, wafted along between the pillars but there was another smell, not so pleasant, mixed with it like a base note which I couldn't place. The scuffling or whispering became more audible and then I distinctly heard a voice speaking in a language I did not understand. I turned but could see no one. Behind me in a shallow drain I saw what I could only interpret as a piece of human excrement.

We turned at right-angles into another colonnade.

"The cost," said the Director, "is what interests your Government most."

"Indeed."

"There is a clemency caucus active in government who want the return of the death penalty for political crimes. But I do not agree. What we have here is maximum deterrent along with maximum protection for the minimum cost. Four men can run this whole prison by themselves," he smiled, "and still have some time for gardening."

"Those two men are not prisoners?"

"No, the prisoners are here." He indicated to my right. I looked and it was only then that I noticed the uprights which I had, up until that point, taken to be part of the structure of the cloister. They were shaped like tall broom cupboards.

"In here?" I asked. The Director nodded. I stepped forward and by rapping with my knuckle discerned that they were made of metal.

"Iron," said the Director. "Treated in such a way that it does not rust."

I looked at the blank face of the container then examined the side nearest to me.

"Soldered shut," said the Director, "and bolted to the stone. That is why we can afford to run the place with only four warders."

"But how do you feed them?"

"The warders or the prisoners?" The Director smiled.

"The prisoners."

"Each containment unit has a hole here for food." The Director pointed to the side furthest from me. I looked at what he indicated and saw a small, square aperture about five feet above the ground. Something moved in the darkness inside. A face stared out at me. Whether it was the face of a horse or a human I could not tell. All I was conscious of was the whiteness of an eye. Dak pointed towards the ground and said:

"And a hole at the bottom for waste."

"Remarkable. Quite, quite remarkable."

We turned another corner into a similar colonnade where the flat stones of the floor were

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shining wet. A man was operating a long jointed bamboo pole which gushed water from its open end. He was guiding the pipe into the upper hole of each containment unit and flushing it out. Soiled water rushed from the hole at floor level and ran down the channel into gratings. He was followed by another man with a wicker basket who was distributing food — what looked like hard balls of dark rice.

We did not like to interrupt this work, so turned yet another corner. Here I noticed that the containment units were much smaller and remarked this to the Director.

"Political crimes run in families", he said. "In the more extreme cases we find it necessary to confine the whole family. The father may have planted the seed of revolt too deep to be rooted out."

I asked if I might take some measurements and the Director agreed. I got out my tape and approached the nearest containment unit.

"This is a girl," said the Director. He pointed to a mark on the metal. My curiosity about who was within was immediately aroused. As I measured I heard small scufflings inside. "She has only been here since the beginning of the year." When I came to measure the upper aperture I saw her face. Through the tangle of hair I could see she was pretty — could have been a sister to the girl they had made dance for me the previous night.

"When women commit political crimes," said the Director, "they are a hundred times more violent than the men." Then the prisoner turned to me and did a quite remarkable thing. She spat. I recoiled but the saliva caught on the material of my collar and I dropped my tape while searching for a handkerchief. The Director, apologising profusely, strode down to the corner and called one of his men. Knowing what was liable to be on the floor I picked the tape up with my handkerchief, rolled it all together and put it in my pocket.

The Director came back with the warder who had been scything the grass but who was now carrying a large sledge-hammer. He indicated the girl's containment unit.

"Excuse us," said the Director. The man raised the hammer, swung it over his shoulder and, with all his strength, crashed it against the metal. There was a thunderous noise, as from the biggest untempered bell I have ever heard. It was deafening for those of us in the confines of the colonnade. What it was like for the creature inside I cannot imagine.

"Proceed," said the Director and we turned and walked away leaving the man swinging his hammer again and again. As we passed through the gardens back to the inn the sound echoed after us with monotonous regularity.

AFTER LUNCH AT THE INN I excused myself to the Director saying that I had to write up my observations and notes. I really wanted a nap because of my previous poor night's rest.

In the quiet of my bedroom I could still hear faintly the continual gong of the sledge-hammer. It occurred to me that the man swinging it must have reached the point of exhaustion and wondered if someone had relieved him.

Because of the noise, again I was unable to sleep. Instead I began a letter home. □

Books

PALESTINE

See no evil, hear no evil

David Gilmour

David Mellor and the Foreign Office may have noticed something rotten in the state of Israel — but, as a new book makes sickeningly clear, the dominant belief in the USA is that Palestinians don't even exist

"WHAT IS PECULIAR about the Palestine conflict," Arnold Toynbee wrote once, "is that the world has listened to the party that has committed the offence and has turned a deaf ear to the victims."

During the last 15 years the situation has become slightly different. While most of the world, including Europe, has become less dull-eared about the grievances of the dispossessed Palestinians, the countries which control their fate (Israel and the USA) have gone even further in the opposite direction. Instead of the deaf ear and mere lack of sympathy, ruling groups in both countries have turned on the Palestinians and blamed them not only for their present plight but also for their "status" as victims. The most brazen and discreditable propaganda effort of recent years, backed by hordes of American intellectuals, claims that the refugees are not in fact Palestinians and therefore undeserving of international sympathy.

The situation is not as bad in Israel as in the USA. The Zionists have been aware of the natives' existence since they began colonising the land in the 19th century; they also have a number of good historians who, in the course of honest attempts to investigate the past, have come up with some disagreeable discoveries about Zionism's treatment of the Palestinians in the 1940s. There is an academic debate about these matters in Israel which is effectively banned in the USA. As Gore Vidal said recently on British television, it is now almost impossible to publish an article critical of Israel in any American publication with a sizeable readership. The collusion of American intellectuals in this anti-Palestinian conspiracy is almost unbelievable. People who condemn racism, colonialism and collective punishment elsewhere in the world find disingenuous arguments for excusing these practices in Israel and the territories it has occupied since 1967. In a fine collection of essays edited by Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens — **Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question** (Verso, £24.95) — two of the major pieces deal with the controversy over the American book *From Time Immemorial* by Joan Peters, which attempts to show that most Palestinians are really Arab immigrants from other countries and thus not *bona fide* victims. Peters' long volume is perhaps the worst book ever to have been written about the Middle East, a shrill catalogue of misquotation, plagiarism and falsification of numbers. As Norman Finkelstein points out in his scrupulous and impressive analysis, she managed to falsify a section of the British Hope Simpson Report in 19 different ways; elsewhere her incompetence led her to use a mediaeval Arab historian as an authority for population movements in the 19th century.

Dismissed in Israel and ridiculed in Britain, *From Time Immemorial* received an ecstatic welcome in the USA. The reviewers squirmed with pleasure, Saul Bellow became gravely lyrical, Barbara Tuchman was overcome with zealotry. Almost alone, Finkelstein informed editors and reviewers that the book was bogus and based on dishonest research. None of them would listen to him or, of course, publish his findings. When he persisted in his campaign, he was howled down in public, threatened in private and his academic future destroyed. Not until the book was damned by an Israeli historian in the *New York Review of Books* did the adulation begin to subside. Barbara Tuchman, however, did little credit to her overblown reputation by continuing to claim that the book's detractors were anti-semites and the Palestinians a "fairy-tale".

The other essays in *Blaming the Victims* are divided into two groups: some deal with further attempts to dehumanise the Palestinians, others give a restrained, factual account of their existence and vicissitudes of the last hundred years. The article on Israeli archaeology may at first seem out of place in the collection, but it makes a valuable point: in the pursuit of contemporary political goals, history is used as propaganda, archaeological discoveries which do not bolster Zionist beliefs are suppressed, while theories that serve Israeli ideology are concocted by distorting the available evidence.

The state of Israel emerged in 1948 from a war in which its forces expelled the majority of Palestine's indigenous inhabitants. This appalling fact, though admitted by modern Israeli historians, so thoroughly undermines the moral basis of the state that for 40 years Zionist propagandists have been pretending that the Palestinians ran away or were ordered out by their leaders. In *Blaming the Victims*, the Israeli writer and translator, Peretz Kidron, discusses two instances when leading Israelis (including the present defence minister) demolished this theory in the manuscripts of their memoirs; in both cases the passages were cut out before publication because they showed that the Palestinians were expelled.

Another essay, by Christopher Hitchens, discusses the Israeli allegation that the Palestinian leaders in 1948 made radio broadcasts urging their people to leave. No evidence for this has ever been produced and the Irish journalist, Erskine Childers, demonstrated that it was nonsense in the early '60s; so unregenerate, however, is Zionist propaganda that the claim is still regularly repeated.

In the triptych painted by the Israeli-American lobby, beside the Palestinian as non-existent

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Essential terrorists or non-existent persons? Whichever they are, they *appear* to have just been celebrating a wedding: Badawi camp, 1983, from Edward Said's *After the Last Sky* (Faber, 1986), photographs by Jean Mohr.

(Golda Meir: "There was no such thing as Palestinians") and the Palestinian as coward (they ran away in 1948, therefore they do not deserve to return), stands the portrait of the Palestinian as, in Edward Said's words, "the essential terrorist". Israel and the USA are now congested with "institutes for the study of terrorism", back-slapping exercises merely designed to convince people that the opponents of these countries are terrorists. Noam Chomsky contributes a devastating essay in the book to this display of double standards: why are Palestinians in hang gliders who attack an Israeli army camp terrorists when Israelis who destroy Beirut hospitals are not?

The answer has a lot to do with propaganda and nothing at all with objective truth. By making the Palestinians almost synonymous with "terrorists", Israel and the USA convince their citizens that there is no need to find a solution for them. Deny the Palestinians a history, proclaim that they do not really exist, castigate them alternately as cowards and terrorists, do everything to minimise international sympathy for their condition and hope that the problem will disappear. It won't work, of course, but the Americans are bad learners and thus the misery carries on. □

An updated edition of David Gilmour's Lebanon: The Fractured Country *has just been published by Sphere.*

ESSAYS

An honourable fogey

Sara Maitland

Penfriends from Porlock
A. N. WILSON *Hamish Hamilton* £14.95

I WANT TO START with a criticism not of A. N. Wilson but of publishers. I dislike the increasingly common habit of publishing the selected ephemera of successful, living book writers.

It seems like pot boiling of the worst kind, since the writer does not even have to go through the healthy labour of writing anything at all; it is a pretentious claim of literary status; and it offers readers bitty and incoherent books. This is not the same as the collected journalism of journalists, essays of essayists, or even of the deserving dead.

I mention this as one of the reasons why I came to the job of reviewing *Penfriends from Porlock* with an inclination to sourness. The other reason is my irritation with A. N. Wilson. Why does a man who can write a novel as lovely and profound as *The Healing Art* and who is the only contemporary fiction writer who can write convincingly and comfortably about Christian spirituality (of *Love Unknown*) have to spend so much time and energy in schoolboyish silliness in various literary genres? How can any serious minded humanist give any credence whatsoever to that gentlemanly, fuddy-duddy, High Tory world view, overtly anti-intellectual, nostalgic and snobbish, which has made Wilson the prime public example of the Young Fogies, in the face of the devastation and injustice which now dominate his sentimental "green and pleasant land"? It is no longer simply fiddling while Rome burns, but comforting and condoning the arsonists with fine classical strains.

Having said all of which, I'll surprise you by saying that *Penfriends from Porlock* touched and pleased me more often than I liked. All the complaints from the previous paragraph still stand, but Wilson, in this collection of about 40 pieces (ranging from quite short reviews to extended full length essays, mainly on literature, but with diversions into politics and religion), writes so beautifully, so sensitively and so generously. When not beating one of his dutiful drums, his reviewing is surprisingly free — more free than most people's — of malice, of bitchiness. This may be a direct effect of his individualism: he reviews writers as subjects, not books as objects, and this perspective must dampen the vicious joke in everyone but the actually mean-minded. His humour is about verbal dexterity rather than personal abuse.

He is also clear about who he is and what he is doing here. He finds the world a sorry place; he is clear about whose fault he thinks this is and, though I totally disagree with him in his conclusions, I appreciate the approach. He sees little chance of anything getting better and sincerely seeks consolations. When he finds them, not only is he grateful but he offers them with elegance and wit to those who will receive them.

He offers, of course, consolation rather than hope. Literature for him is the opiate of the intelligent, the heart in a heartless world. He needs this consolation because he despairs — and it is probably this despair that drives him to his too frequent silliness and patronising pomposities and the occasional chilling cliché (often based on stereotyped assumptions about national or regional characteristics which sit oddly with his determined individualism). But it is not a posture.

> Since all things change and, with few exceptions (dentists, sound recordings), get worse, there will always be room, you would have thought, for elegiac poets. The poplars are felled, Ha'nacker Hill is in desolation and they are in business. So you would have thought . . . But paradoxically, in the last twenty or thirty years, elegy has become the hardest thing of all to write. Change and decay have reached such exaggerated proportions that it has become hard to find a tone of voice in which it is acceptable to talk about them. (*From Wilson's essay on Larkin*)

Before *Penfriends from Porlock* I would have called Wilson peevish, but now I think he is both truly sad and truly angry — both noble things — and his novels read differently in the light of it.

Do not misunderstand me: despair is a sin and all earthly consolations fail. Nostalgic, pessimistic conservatism, along with sentimental nationalism, are extremely dangerous; "Victorian Values" lead to injustice and poverty for those outside the warm fireside glow of privilege. But it will not hurt us at all to read this sort of writing and learn to cast our own sorrow and anger with such humaneness, such generosity, such wit. □

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BREAKING UP . . .

Stop making sense

Martin Thom

Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals
ZYGMUNT BAUMAN *Polity* £25

THE TERM "INTELLECTUALS" was coined around the turn of the century, perhaps at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. Already, however, the ancient Roman dream of subordinating historical contingency to the severity of the laws, inherited by the legal advisers to the first absolute monarchs and further elaborated by the *philosophes* and by the Jacobins, had been shattered.

Certainly, by the 1920s and 1930s, intellectuals as a category, howsoever subdivided, were a central preoccupation of writers as various as Julien Benda and Antonio Gramsci. Yet no one would then have argued for so drastic a dismantling of the category as is proposed in Zygmunt Bauman's new book.

The modern world, we are told, is over and done with, and the postmodern one, in which intellectuals can no longer be legislators but merely interpreters, is upon us. This is a double funeral: if the figure of the legislator-intellectual is dead, so by the same token is its agent on the world-historical stage, the industrial proletariat. Bauman has arrived at this conclusion, it would seem, by two separate but converging roads: that of postmodernist theory and that of a more narrowly economic and political study of modern, industrial societies.

It is the theory of postmodernism that provides Zygmunt Bauman with the crucial clue regarding the death of the legislator-intellectual. If "modern" art, the argument runs, has been nothing but a series of transgressions, with a new rule replacing an old (and broken) rule, in a potentially infinite, onwards movement of mind, then we are no longer in a period when such an art can be produced. Instead, pastiche and collage are the dominant strategies, so that where an avant-garde was, there shall a plethora of styles be. How does this narrowly aesthetic view of the postmodern square with the wide world?

Contrary to what Marxists have supposed, the self-organisation of labour is not, Bauman insists, the hidden, negative truth of capital. For, instead of labour freeing itself from capital (through the socialisation of the means of production), capital has increasingly freed itself from labour. In other words, through automation, the investment of capital now leads, for the first time in history, to fewer and fewer, not more and more people being engaged in productive labour. It is therefore increasingly hard to entertain an image of the industrial proletariat as bearer of the torch of universal reason, as the rightful heir, by negation, of the Enlightenment vision, or as an army, encamped in its great "labour barracks", inside the ramparts of an old and decaying order.

Indeed, for Bauman, the hopes invested for 150 years in the most conscious elements of the labouring classes were attached to a chimerical concatenation of qualities now dimmed or tarnished. When a factory proletariat emerged, it was a genuinely novel phenomenon, untried (and therefore uncompromised), condensed and therefore highly visible, fast growing, endowed with the apparently magical capacity (like tribal blacksmiths) of making nature tame and malleable, stubborn, militant and conscious that its members shared, for good or ill, a common fate. Above all, the factory proletariat was a captive audience that would not challenge the authority of the intellectuals.

However, just as the number of those engaged in agricultural work fell dramatically in the course of the 19th century, so many now hold that industrial manufacture will in 25 years' time require only five per cent of the total labour force. The poor were once a "reserve army of labour", drawn into the factories in periods of boom and thrown out again in slumps, and had nothing to sell but their labour-power; the new poor, an "underclass" (in Ralf Dahrendorf's description), have nothing to sell whatsoever, for a reserve army of consumption is simply not required. Dispossessed of those civil liberties that the Enlightenment had dreamed of spreading across the whole world, today's poor lack the heroic qualities of the old industrial proletariat. For them, social control is "repressive"; for those in, or above work, it is "seductive" and creates ever more "needs" by means of an increasingly triumphant market. This makes the intellectuals, as "interpreters", freer but less powerful.

As I was drafting this review, I was also reading E.P. Thompson's *William Morris* and Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society*, books which are both, in different ways, concerned with 19th-century critiques of capitalism, and of positivist, utilitarian and other traditions. Bauman describes his study as "a sociological hermeneutics of the meta-history of intellectuals"; this is a way of saying that the book is a "debewitchment" of the category of intellectual, a little in the manner of Michel Foucault and a little in that of Ernest

According to Arthur Peters in JEAN COCTEAU AND HIS WORLD (Thames & Hudson, £25) Cocteau was a star "eclipsing all others" who could take criticism: he "manfully swallowed this public pail of cold water in the face". And, whereas Gide led "part of a French generation down the primrose path" to communism, to Cocteau politics would have been "an intolerable distraction". Peters' writing is ugly and commonplace: art and homosexuality are innate compulsions; the art, occasional abortions and bad chemistry notwithstanding, was nonetheless redemptive. You might enjoy the likes of "the rest, as they say, is history" or even the idea that Stravinsky's eyes "acted like genitals, probing and responding", but to describe the German occupation of Paris as "grand guignol" is pretty sick. The one novel suggestion, that Cocteau had sympathy for the common man, is totally unsubstantiated. From the 400 pictures, Cocteau's world looks sharp, funny, brilliant, lacking in warmth and alarming. Despite the text, the young companions come through in the photographs; though Marcel Khill, who spent a year with Cocteau, is summarily dismissed — for all that his full Arab name "conjured up exotic visions of the Casbah". Any page of *Past Tense*, Volume One of Cocteau's diaries published earlier this year, would tell you more than the whole of Mr Peters' sycophantic drivel. Pass the public pail. (Paul Hallam)

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Gellner. However, I have to say that I find the treatment of 18th- and 19th-century history schematic and, at times, coarse-grained. It is all very well to claim that the legislator-intellectuals (the *philosophes*, the Jacobins, the ideologists) laid waste "traditional, self-managing and self-reproducing culture", in the name of truth, justice and Enlightenment, but one could, at the drop of an *Encyclopédie*, find figures within each national tradition who do not fit so imperious, indeed imperialist, an image of practical reason (for example, William Morris).

Consider, more generally, how Raymond Williams, a philologically-minded historian of ideas, investigates culture as a domain in which agents may become conscious, to a degree, of the social relations that constrain them, and as "a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical social judgment and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative". In this less monolithic and more nuanced sense, intellectuals will always discern the ghost of natural law amid the entangled detail of positive legislation. It is because I believe this that I find the double conclusion to *Legislators and Interpreters* (one "modern style", one "post-modern style"), and the postmodern position itself, a *trahison des clercs*, as Benda phrased it in 1927.

However, if readers of this review were to consult an essay published by Zygmunt Bauman in the *New Statesman* last year (25 September), "Fighting the Wrong Shadow", they would find that he too now regards postmodernism as a betrayal and a loss of nerve and, recapitulating many of the arguments presented above, advocates an uncompromisingly ethical defence of democratic values, in the name of what he calls "the counter-culture of modernism". □

. . . IS HARD TO DO

Revenge of the dinosaurs

Terry Eagleton

Logics of Disintegration
PETER DEWS *Verso* £22.95 & £7.95

FOR THE PAST two decades, the cultural left of Europe and North America has been swept by the theoretical tide known as post-structuralism. Structuralism proper took language as its model for everything else; post-structuralism does the same, but insists that language is a slippery, ambiguous affair which resists all attempts to reduce it to system.

Truth, meaning and identity are accordingly destabilised: instead, the world becomes an elusive play of power and desire into which all "metaphysical" certainties crumble. "Closure", firm grounds, rational totalities and orderly theories of history are ousted by the split and schizoid, linguistic indeterminancy, the unstaunchable flow of desire.

Much of this was a way of keeping the failed insurgency of 1968 simmering on the back burner. If the student movement couldn't subvert the system, then floating signifiers and libidinal intensities might do so instead. Post-structuralism sprang in part from a disillusionment with traditional left politics, which hadn't made too good a showing in '68; all of that was now part of a totalitarian Reason, to be outflanked by a new attention to "microstrategies", the politics of the body, the aberrant and unincorporable. Feminist and libertarian themes moved centre stage, while classical Marxists roamed like lonely dinosaurs through the backwoods. Anyone using such drearily undeconstructed terms as "truth", "rationality" or "global system" was likely to be unceremoniously shown the door.

The political potential of post-structuralism, however, had always been deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, its assault on stable meaning shook the ruling order's smug trust in its ideological certitudes and threatened to play havoc in academia. On the other, there seemed no way of pulling the carpet out from under one's opponent's truths without pulling it out simultaneously from beneath oneself. And, just as the women's movement was turning to a "politics of the subject", post-structuralism was busily at work erasing the whole notion of the subject from sight.

As the crisis of capitalism deepened from the mid-1970s onwards, the radical credentials of the movement were called increasingly into question. Erstwhile left philosophers ended up denouncing the Gulag on French television chat shows, or dining with Giscard. Some leading post-structuralist thinkers departed for the New World (Derrida, Lyotard), others for the underworld (Barthes, Lacan, Foucault). The Marxist left, stunned into embarrassed silence for a decade, began emerging from the backwoods.

Peter Dews has been studying post-structuralism for years, as a dentist might study an intriguing case of molar decay; and his superb study represents British Marxism's considererd response to the post-structuralist vogue. Impressively erudite and subtly analytical, Dews' book moves steadily through the work of four leading post-structuralist theorists (Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard and Foucault), remorselessly demonstrating the various limits or impasses in which their thought is caught up. In a nifty piece of philosophical footwork, he shows convincingly that Jacques Derrida, enemy of all transcendental thought, is in fact an arch-transcendentalist who throws the course of modern philosophy back to the early Schelling. Jacques Lacan, the post-structuralist reinterpreter of Freud, is accorded some grudging respect, but finally convicted of linguistic idealism; while the sheer amoralism and adventurism of much of Jean-François Lyotard's writing is taken sternly to task. In a couple of corruscating chapters on Michel Foucault, Dews catches his work in a crippling contradiction between its political radicalism and its cultural relativism.

Dews has clearly come to bury post-structuralism rather than to draw up a balance sheet and his book is occasionally marred, for all its surprisingly unpolemical tone, by this one-sidedness. Political radicals, feminists not least, have after all learnt much from this whole current of thought, a truth which Dews is loath to acknowledge. For a resolutely Marxist work, the book is also at times a little thin on political critique — the work of a philosopher rather than a political theorist — and to that degree in a certain complicity with what it assails. Such queries aside, *Logics of Disintegration* is a major and brilliant work of Marxist theory, admirably rigorous, clear-minded and well-researched, which represents a watershed in the fraught, ambiguous relations between traditional Marxism and its Parisian critics. □

FICTION

Postal system

Christina Koning

Laing
ANN SCHLEE *Macmillan* £10.95

A NOVEL SET in the distant past has the advantage, for the writer, of dealing with a fixed and completed period — one which, paradoxically, can free his or her invention.

Recent novels from a number of writers — William Golding, Peter Hoyle, Melvyn Bragg, George Macbeth and J.M. Coetzee — have dealt with the past, some using the precise delineation of historical events as the starting point for fiction, others finding in the relative strangeness of the past a release from imaginative constraints. The intention in each case is the same: to reflect, in the distorting mirror of the past, the nature of our own time, and to tell us something about the kind of fictions that we tell ourselves.

Ann Schlee's novel belongs to the former category, in as much as it is based on an actual correspondence between the explorer Alexander Laing, who led a mission across the Sahara to the source of the Niger in 1825, and the British Consul, Colonel Warrington, who received him on the first stage of his journey from Tripoli in North Africa. The novel focuses on the relationship between the two men as it is reflected in their letters: the lonely misfit, Laing, suffering from the petty humiliations of his humble birth and lack of money is contrasted with the frustrated politician, Warrington, who sees in Laing's daring enterprise the chance for which he has been waiting to redeem a hitherto undistinguished career.

Laing's relationship with Warrington's daughter is the occasion for a second group of letters, which reflect the poignancy of the young couple's situation (Laing marries Emma Warrington on the eve of his departure for the Interior, when she is gravely ill after a suicide attempt) and give, in their accounts of the pain of separation, an alternative version of the quest from the official one presented in Laing's letters to the Consul.

As in her earlier novel, *Rhine Journey*, Schlee depends for her effects on the slow accretion of detail. Laing's ennui and frustration are felt, rather than explicitly stated, in the descriptions of listless, boring afternoons spent in the company of the Consul's dull wife and his gauche daughters at his country estate outside Tripoli. As he waits, consumed with impatience, for permission to continue his journey from the region's powerful

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sheiks, Laing finds himself unwittingly drawn into the little circle, at the centre of which is the mute, rebellious figure of Emma Warrington. Like a Chekhovian heroine, she has "an air of indefinite waiting", as if something momentous were just about to happen. In this instance, the something is her relationship with Laing, whose realisation that he is in love with her, and that his quest for Timbuctoo is a delusion, comes when it is too late to turn back.

After his departure from Tripoli into the "pure void" of the desert, Laing becomes a kind of ghost, his insubstantial nature, even for the woman who loves him, symbolised by their unconsummated marriage. He exists for her only in language, as a dimly recollected presence behind the words of his letters, which themselves bear little relation to reality, since they are written months before she receives them.

Laing's letters to Emma form a kind of commentary upon, or counterpoint to, those passages describing the desert crossing. It becomes clear that there are two accounts, the historical and the private, the one modifying the other but neither offering the whole truth. Schlee's novel is about the partial nature of all fictions and the imprecision of language in conveying what the world is like. Reality, she suggests, is a kind of desert or wasteland, from which the writer sends messages for another — the reader — to decipher. Meaning becomes more and more attenuated as the memory of what is real recedes. In the end, all that is left is words. □

THE FUTURE

Divorce & re-marriage

Glyn Ford

Europe without America?
JOHN PALMER *Oxford* £14.95

AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL from Europe, militarily, economically and politically, will create for John Palmer the space for a Socialist United States of Europe. The political style of this new Europe can be gauged by the touchstones he adduces: the West German Green Party, the Lucas Aerospace Alternative Corporate Plan, the GLC. 1968 written on a continental scale.

With only a three-year break, Palmer has been European Editor of the *Guardian* since 1975. For him, the USA established a hegemonic world position immediately after the Second World War and maintained that dominant position unchallenged for more than a quarter of a century. Yet, as with the United Provinces and the United Kingdom before, achieving such a position is only transitory: we wait for Kondratieff to recycle the world economy. US domination no longer reflects the realities of power. The recent events on the world's stock exchanges merely confirm this, even though the deep-rooted historical and political forces that have held the Atlantic Alliance together will not readily disintegrate.

Europe without America? believes that Europe can gain its freedom. To do this will require a cohesive Europe, wider than the current European Community, that has close relations with the countries of Central Europe. To achieve this cohesion, a number of fundamental steps have to be taken, including the development of an independent and self-reliant European security and defence policy to replace dependence on the USA, the creation of a European technological community that would have the resources to tackle Europe's technological plunge and the introduction of an industrial "counter-strategy" that would replace free-trade with planned trade.

These three steps in themselves already establish a daunting Agenda for the European Left. In the 1950s British business's confidence in its industrial dominance was as fervent as it was misplaced; today, the same kind of misplaced optimism would be true of Labour's belief in solely national solutions to these problems. Clearly no one is suggesting that everything must be done at a European level — many political tasks are best tackled at local or national levels — but it is clear that the United Kingdom does not now have the economic or political strength to avoid the compromises of European Community solutions to these problems.

In some areas Palmer does not go far enough. To suggest that the excessively modest and rather aimless ESPRIT and EUREKA programmes are even a first step in tackling the lack of European and technological competitiveness in the face of the Strategic Defence Initiative and the President's Competitivity Initiative in the United States, or the plethora of pre-competitive collaborative research programmes in Japan under the guidance of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, is to misjudge the scale of the problem by at least an order of magnitude.

Europe without America? is a little like a *Hamlet* where the Prince only gets a walk-on part. The major reason that the USA's global domination is at an end lies on the other side of the Pacific: it is the Japanese "economic miracle" that has hollowed out American industry to a position of total collapse in some sectors. It is Japanese producers who are underselling indigenous manufacturers in Europe and the United States. Historically, within capitalism, the successor to the power in decline is not the one that has leapt ahead politically or militarily; rather it is the one that, less spectacularly but more importantly, has won the race for improved productivity.

But Palmer's vision, even if flawed in places, is one that cannot be ignored. As the Labour Party is beginning to come to terms with the European Community, that Community's position is being transformed. The recent appointment of Takeshita as Japanese Prime Minister is a clear demonstration that Japan will take a more assertive role in military and political matters. Europe without America will be maneouvering on unknown terrain. Palmer has helped to show the future face of the new world-economy. □

Glyn Ford is MEP for Greater Manchester East.

Apology

With careless abandon, we last week killed off *Everywoman* magazine — by referring to its "collapse" in our review of Janice Winship's *Inside Women's Magazines*. *Everywoman* is not only alive and well but, in March, will celebrate three years of publication.

SOUL

Redneck and black

Nick Kimberley

Say it One Time for the Broken Hearted
BARNEY HOSKYNS *Fontana* £4.95

"THE COUNTRY SIDE of Southern Soul" is Hoskyn's subject, and James Carr's "At the Dark End of the Street" a key record. On it, Carr is trapped in an adulterous affair (it's never clear who's the married party) and comforts his lover: despite "hiding in shadows where we don't belong, living in darkness to hide our wrong", they can still meet — but only "at the dark end of the street".

The song was about more than adultery, however. Carr is black and sings in a distinctly black style. Yet almost everyone else involved — musicians, producer/songwriters Chips Moman and Dan Penn — was white. White entrepreneurialism exploiting black music in familiar fashion? To an extent, but it was more than that. Southern Soul fused black and white idioms, black and white musicians, to produce something that, for the duration of the record at least, was integrated. "The Dark End of the Street", then, is also about the potential for love — musical, sexual and more generally social — between black and white. What black and white achieved in a Memphis recording studio in 1966 was outlawed in other situations — hence "living in darkness to hide our wrong".

The greatest virtue of Hoskyns' thoroughly researched book is that it throws out any easy assumptions about musical "purity". Often against their strongest wishes, black and white forms mingle all the time. The entanglement is thrown into perspective by two records just outside Hoskyns' purview: Hank Williams' 1950 monologue "The Funeral" and the Staple Singers' 1965 version, recorded in a black Chicago church. Williams, hardly a liberal, shows all the signs of redneck dismay as he wanders into a black church where a child is being buried. He draws attention to the "curly hair and protruding lips"; then the preacher stands "with a manner sort of awkward and countenance grotesque" — "the simplicity and shrewdness of his Ethiopian face showed the wisdom and the ignorance of a crushed, undying race". But this is no Klannish creed; for all his dangerous clumsiness, Williams wants a bridge between his white isolation and the black experience of community which he sees.

Fifteen years later, on a record which shows some signs of militancy — the LP was called *Freedom Highway* and was recorded in the year of the Watts riots and Malcolm X's assassination — the Staple Singers made their version of Hank's homily. They cut out the racial references, but stick pretty close to the original style. The Staples have always been one of the more countrified black gospel groups (and the record was produced by white Nashvillean Billy Sherrill) but the audience makes it clear that "The Funeral" was a valid part of their repertoire.

This is the anomalous situation Hoskyns

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investigates. He runs the risk of losing non-fans in his necessarily tangled account of who made what for whom, who wrote the songs, who played on the sessions and who produced the end result. But his love for the music carries him through. Alert to the commercial pressures which fostered this brief flowering — by the early '70s, Southern Soul was fading fast — he refuses to categorise it as a pure product of American finance.

He may win some enemies by his regret for what's happened to pop — "the victory . . . of glitz and glamour over grits'n'gravy" — but he's not content to wallow in nostalgia. He quotes white producer Quinton Claunch: "The trouble with contemporary soul is that few of the singers are coming out of the church any more. That religious element is gone." This flies in the face of black gospel music's recent upsurge, but suggests that church *style* is no longer attractive. Elsewhere, Cosimo Matassa, simplifying but on the track of something, says, "the subject matter of r'n'b and country was all the same anyway — lost love, anticipated love; lost money, anticipated money." That proletarian clash between romance and finance is absolutely crucial.

This may not be the last word on the subject, but it's a lovingly thorough account of a supremely moving music. Full of illuminating observations from both Hoskyns and his interviewees, *Say it One Time for the Broken Hearted* wins *my* broken heart for having the nerve, in the face of almost universal adulation for Otis Redding, to assert that his style was "uniform barking". After reading it, I (as Kip Anderson once sang) went off and cried. □

SCIENCE FICTION

Pie in the sky

Josephine Saxton

TO A MULTITUDE of faithful readers, science fiction is a religion, complete with prophets. A good deal of the material of sf is itself of a religious nature, I think, if we include metaphysics, mysticism and the transcendental or gnostic. The ubiquitous apocalypse is an aspect of this fiction, stretching the writer's imagination to create ever more post-disaster landscapes. We have a dusty and radiation singed earth, seas of poisonous mud, and acid rain burning off hair; we have brand-new Ice Ages, diseased breezes, floods and intelligent protein. (On second thoughts, the creation of such horrors hardly stretches the imagination at all.)

It cannot be easy to gift-wrap any message of hope in such doom-laden pages, but Arthur Versluis has done so in **Telos** (RKP Arkana, £3.95). It is possible to believe that, among the muck and rubbish of a world despoiled, love can be more powerful than violence, if it is written in the right words. The book's cover states: "not allegory, nor fact, nor fiction, but a reflection of the very nature of things". Well, that is going it a bit, for fiction it certainly is, based on ancient views of how things work, namely Indian *Yugas* or Ages, the last and worst of which we are now in. Soon, a great reversal, as Brahma takes another slow breath.

Telos is a city which covers the planet, with food running out and no green remaining except a few pale plants in the palace of a redundant king, who observes: "We've even obliterated the ancient cycles, and seasons; all that endures is dead . . . how could this be all that's left of a green world?" But then there is the legend of the green Vault, and he sometimes has access to another dimension wherein appears She — not the standard sf priestess complete with sequinned bra, but a believable entity. Five people must be reunited via impossible routes in order that the Green Vault may be broached and the renewal of all existence begin. In other hands this could have been claptrap, but Versluis writes with a lack of hysteria and a true earnestness.

To fuel cynicism in the rationalist, we are detoured via several reincarnations, with sequences among the Maya complete with rather too many *exotolotls*, the blessed lack of false archaisms redeeming the scene. Arthur Versluis, the cover tells us, is a student of Hermetic philosophy, Buddhist tradition, the author of *The Philosophy of Magic* and recipient of the Hopwood Award for Literature, and lives on a farm in Michigan.

This has an air of make-believe about it, a picture of a sort of Tom Robbins without the humour. But *Telos*, his first novel, is a considerable achievement, the only danger being that embedded in its central idea is a comfort, that strange hope which may undermine action.

The Urth of the New Sun by Gene Wolfe (Gollancz, £11.95) has an underlying theme of transformation. Wolfe exploits the Kabbala without mentioning his source, but few heroes plunge into a stream in Yesod in order to reach Briah, who shall not later attempt Aziluth. This indicates to me that there will be further books in this series; his devoted acolytes take heart. Wolfe writes exquisitely well, alas about torch-bearers, torturers, Citadels and people who say "sieur". For those whose teeth do not curl up at such embellishments, this book contains some very strange occurrences, marking what is a spiritual journey as much as mere adventure, like Doris Lessing's Sufi teaching stories without the archness.

Depth psychology, one thousand feet below the surface of the South Pacific to be exact, is explored in Michael Crichton's **Sphere** (Macmillan, £10.95), a less creative book, but a very efficient one. The Jungian view of ourselves, especially that bad hat the unseen Shadow, gets mixed up with an old-fashioned adventure. All it lacks is a Wurlitzer to play as a mind-created giant squid squeezes a submarine, influenced perhaps by the sphere itself, mysteriously and enigmatically lying there, a relative of the geometric mystery in *2001*. There is plenty of scope for psychic fun and games and much drama here, yet the book remains flat, more like an outline for the movie it will probably become.

The cover, though, is beautiful, bearing a silver hologram of the sphere itself, and claims to be the first of its kind. A great improvement on the usual rubbish-art of sf covers.

The cover of Isaac Asimov's new Fantastic Voyage, **Destination Brain** (Grafton, £10.95) will lose vegetarian readers, but those of stronger stomach will find him well up to the mark on science, as he was 20 years ago, when the first book in the series came out. This, too, will be a feature film, and I hope they speed up the opening sequences; Asimor takes 159 pages to get the mini-passengers on board, after much wrangling between Russians and Americans. Any religious or symbolic interpretations of this book are irrelevant; it is a tale about "a desperate search for the origins of thought itself". That certainly puts concerned transcendentalists in their place, but personally I could have used more dendrites and less of Comrade Boranov and Academician Shapirov and their playschool politics. Or even a touch of spirit. □

Signs of greatness (#10)

Martin Stannard

It's less than two days to the big day, and Europe's guns
are primed as they should be, and they're even aimed in
the right direction. People are preparing to be ever so brave.
The intelligentsia are having one last quick read.
I think one sign of greatness is to be able to own up
to cowardice when all about you are busily showing off how
tough and fearless they are able and happy to be.
A man with caterpillar tracks across his torso, a professor
of tough shit, tells you that it's iron filings for tea
and from now on you're going to have to horde your excrement
so the country will smell so awful the enemy will think twice
before invading. That's a tremendous ruse, you say. A genius
must've thought that one up. A man with razor blades the length
of his spine says, Yeah, it's great. It's gunna be Paradise.

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HEALTH CRISIS (Contd from p.16

democracy. Both demands can be met if they are properly organised and operated in partnership between providers and the community which they serve. Those requirements are not in conflict.

That should be the starting point of any review which the government undertakes. But it won't be. Instead, there will be an internal examination in which the government appoints prosecution and defence, jury and witnesses, in order to justify alternative funding, charges and reduced provision. A noose trial for the NHS.

That is no good for Britain. For medium and long term planning, we should have an open and impartial consideration of how the needs of the nation can best be met by a modern health service free at the time of use. In the short term provision is the priority. Resolving the crisis cannot wait for the conclusions of a review. The government must act immediately and

☐ award the NHS at least that £1,300 million (almost exactly the product of 1p off income tax) which the Select Committee on Social Services, with its in-built Tory majority, estimated was the shortfall in funding up to 1986;

☐ take the professional advice of the National Association of Health Authorities and meet the full shortfall of £235 million this year so that the next financial year does not start with a new financial crisis;

☐ make the commitment to fund a new pay structure for nurses, once it has been priced by the Pay Review Body, to reward qualifications, specialisations and shift work properly;

☐ fund the health authorities so that they can finance planned developments next year and meet their repair and maintenance bills;

☐ introduce a strategy for waiting lists based not on random injections of cash but on properly financed management and information programmes which will match up skills, beds and needs on a locally determined basis.

Implementing these changes would not at once meet un-met needs. But it would begin tackling them and provide a positive way of preventing future crisis.

Searching for "alternative funding" will do none of that. Alternative funding will bring an alternative health service. The British people neither want nor need that. They want an NHS that is better, not one in bits. ☐

'And ever more came out of that same door wherein I went' . . .

This was the plaint of a man who could not escape the common round of conventional answers to his questions. Perhaps he was stuck in beliefs — maybe even sacred ones — but he was stuck. Is there no way out?

Perhaps; if you would like to see, write to:

The Blavatsky Trust (3)
P.O. Box 16, London W3 6HS

LETTERS

Fame at last!

Mrs Sarah Isaacs, Barnet, Herts
Did you know that Dr Ewart Plimmer of the BBC1 TV programme "Casualty" was clearly seen to be reading your magazine while recovering in bed from a heart attack?

We need to protect *all* our children

Ken Livingstone MP, House of Commons, London SW1
Congratulations on your editorial (*NS* 8 Jan.). Can I further add to the job of exposing the hypocrisy of the Tories on the issue of "promoting" homosexuality in schools.

The reality is very different from the public hysteria they are whipping up. A major in-depth survey of 400 young homosexuals in London — by the Gay Teenage Group with funds, incidentally, from the GLC — found that, far from there being any "promotion" of homosexuality in schools, they got no assistance or advice at all. And these young people desperately needed that assistance and advice.

Our society is not geared to help someone who is 13 or 14 and realises they are gay or lesbian. The survey showed that three out of five had been verbally abused, one in five had been beaten up, one in twelve had been sent to a psychiatrist and one in ten had been thrown out of their homes because of their sexuality.

Children were abused, beaten up and felt ostracised and isolated at school. Most horrifying of all, one in five of these young gay and lesbian people had attempted to commit suicide because of the anguish, loneliness and despair which they felt.

Will the squalid clause that the Conservatives are bouncing through parliament help any of these young people? Will it increase fear or reduce it? Can there be any doubt about the answers to these questions?

We are told that the Conservatives want to protect childeren, but this clause of theirs will increase the suffering and anguish these particular children feel and greatly increase their sense of isolation.

We do need to ask how we are to protect children, but we must first ask who we are protecting them from. I was a member of ILEA for 13 years. Every example of child abuse was reported to the chair of the schools committee, and in every example we had to deal with a heterosexual male teacher sexually assaulting girls. That is the reality we face and we should publicise that reality.

Nowhere — not even decent — to live

Jeremy Swain, Outreach Worker, London WC2
I expected John Sweeney to highlight some of the problems facing people sleeping out which have been created or exacerbated by government policies (*NS* Christmas issue). There are plenty to choose from: the continuous decline in local authority housing stock which has denied to many the opportunity of establishing themselves in reasonably priced, independent accommodation; the inability (and sometimes unwillingness) of local authorities to carry out their statutory obligations under the 1985 Housing Act; the increasingly chaotic and punitive nature of the benefit system which discourages many from making a claim and which provides few opportunities to secure decent and permanent accommodation.

Instead, Mr Sweeney seems to have thumbed through a few back-copies of the *Standard* or the *Sun*. He follows the well-worn journalistic tradition of portraying homeless people as extraordinary, abnormal and usually feckless. He keeps on this tack with a degree of difficulty as some of the characters he meets show disconcerting signs of normality ("an eerily normal conversation", "startlingly articulate"). Mr Sweeney's sigh of relief is almost audible as, stumbling around in the dark at one of the sleeping out sites, he finds a couple of men who are happy to provide him with the necessary stereotypes; they are extremely abusive and "mind-bendingly" drunk.

He then chooses to ignore the evidence of the government's own report "Single and Homeless" and portrays the majority of homeless people as being of Irish or Scottish descent (about 25 per cent) and as having drink problems (about 12 per cent) and psychiatric problems (10 per cent). In fact Mr Sweeney appears very keen to highlight problems, except it seems, the problems of having nowhere decent to live. (Figures from "Single and Homeless" DoE 1982)

Grassroots Gran

Audrey D. Gardner, Maidstone, Kent
As a pensioner, I have to rely on a passed-on copy of the *NS* so my congratulations to Ben Pimlott for his clear and compassionate article (*NS* 4 Dec.) seem tardy.

My frustration is constantly being inflated by the poses and vote-seeking antics of Labour's leaders and new 'image makers'. Having suffered the results of golden wasted opportunities for socialism under Wilson and Callaghan, are we going to be bamboozled yet

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again?

As we start 1988, my three children are struggling in the shackles of low pay and high mortgages; my seven grandchildren are obliged to inherit poorly paid jobs (if any), a threadbare NHS and absolutely no chance of decent housing at a price they will be able to afford.

There is nothing in a capitalist system that holds out any hope of a less divided society. Divide and rule is being applied to every aspect of our lives in order to give everyone the chance to look down on someone. While Thatcher sings the praises of community care, her policies ensure that our communities are being ruthlessly split, stifled, sunk and sneered at by self-righteous careerists.

At 65, I am convinced that parliament is just a 'window dressing', our 'freedom' a foolish fantasy and our democracy a dire delusion. Were I not a sincere socialist I would be deeply depressed. As it is I wish us all a more informed New Year and mightier power to your pen, Ben Pimlott.

'68 strings and springs

Jean d'Eglan, Paris

How strange that a magazine of such an intellectual reputation as the *New Statesman* should perpetuate the romantic image of May '68 in France! (*NS* Christmas issue) What the "May events" need is a Brecht or a Shakespeare to reveal the political strings and springs behind the Paris street disturbances. As a show, May '68 was perfectly planned, staged and controlled throughout, which explains for instance that the only fatal casualty was due to a traffic accident in Lyons. Even the exchange of cobblestones and tear-gas grenades was synchronised like a ballet, with police officers dressed as students organising the choreography and demonstrators singing a litany of slogans intended to distract public opinion from the real issues at stake.

In order to throw out hypotheses as to the actual producers of the show, is it not time to analyse some of the political consequences of the events?

1. May '68 forced employers to increase workers' salaries which were the lowest in industrialised Western Europe, thus preventing a much more serious uprising.
2. It brought about the fall of de Gaulle who had aroused the hatred of all those who were opposed to his policies: independence of Algeria, independence of France from American economic and military power, independence from the Stock Exchange ("La politique de la France ne se fait pas à la Corbeille".)
3. It allowed the conservatives to win the general elections by frightening public opinion and creating in people's minds a confusion between street disturbances and left-wing policies as expressed in slogans.
4. It enabled the opening of the Paris peace talks between the United States and the Vietcong to pass almost unnoticed since, strangely enough, this coincided with the climax of violence on the 11th May (occupation of the Sorbonne, police intervention, night of the barricades) which hit the headlines the world over and thus spared the Americans a highlighting of their humiliation.
5. As for the postgraduates who were clever enough to play the game, they were rewarded by the creation overnight of 12 new universities in the Paris region, which meant an exceptional increase in the number of teaching posts available.

No Victorian revolution

Judith Hanna, London SW1

1968 and 1688 are not the only significant anniversaries needing commemoration. Don't forget 1788. It is not just a peg for promoting tourism to Australia. *New Statesman* readers should recognise, as the Aborigines ask, that it is the anniversary of their displacement by arrogant and ignorant white British invaders, and should add to the chorus urging the Hawke government to at least draw up a treaty recognising and guaranteeing them land rights and compensation for the dispossession that constituted the British colonies.

It is also worth considering this anniversary's significance for Britain. Cheap imports from the colonies supported the Industrial Revolution in this country; cheap export of unwanted people — the poor caught stealing bread or a blanket, political agitators and early trade unionists, Fenians — relieved prison populations resulting from overharsh sentencing, and also population pressure, poverty, political discontent. Is this why revolution never erupted to unseat Victorian values?

Couldn't run a whelk stall

Cyril Crook, London SW20

John Pilger (*NS* Christmas issue) says the British people have had every right to be dissatisfied with their "nationalised industries" and that a future Labour government need only introduce "real public ownership" to transform that dissatisfaction into delighted acceptance. But may one ask who will be appointed to the government bodies he envisages as being "wholly accountable" to the public?

Not, presumably, the equivalent of the professional people (managers, accountants, scientists, engineers, and the like) who have been running these industries hitherto? Not — Heaven forfend! — well-intentioned Labour-supporting men and women experienced only in the comparatively "whelk stall" business of manipulating local union and municipal affairs? Not backbench Labour MPs lacking the qualities necessary to forge successful careers for themselves in the Parliamentary Party or various seconded mandarin Civil Servants?

Polemical Pilger should emerge from his ivory tower-block and tell us exactly who are the people he has in mind, so eminently suitable and qualified to instruct the already well-instructed on how to conduct these great business undertakings *successfully* (no point in letting them collapse) in this self-interested and harshly competitive world?

Metaphor squared

Neil Lancastle, Cambridge

Peter Kellner asks if Thatcherism has a unifying theory, and comes to some tentative conclusions regarding the use and maintenance of power (*NS* Christmas issue). I would go further and say that Thatcherism concerns the use and maintenance of money, the medium of power in a capitalist society.

Using a nautical analogy: on a capitalist ship the orders are issued according to profit, loss and efficiency. When the people grasp the rudder by electing their own leaders, if they ignore the advice of the captain, the ship is going to miss the trade winds. Thatcherism, with its massive deregulation programmes, has taken politics into the crow's nest, watching the horizon and advising the ship where to go. Look after the money and the people can look after themselves. When we next enter port, are we going to grab the rudder and tell the captain to head for the sun? If not, I'm going to get a safer job ashore. Yours, watching the weather . . .

Allo John — get a new motor

M. Prior, London N5

John Lloyd shows increasing signs of not having talked to anyone outside London since the miners' strike and, inside London, mostly to those "who seek to command the policy review within the Labour Party" (*NS* 11 Dec.). He has acquired a subtle contempt for those whom once he took more seriously. He puts thoughts into others' heads which actually exist within his own: "The clever people are those who got out of that [the manual working class] long ago" and there is "no future in it any more, no future in the communities and the culture which that kind of work created." We are left in little doubt that in his mind the clever ones arrived on the platforms at Labour conferences and the culture . . . Well, that probably just evaporated.

There are two good reasons why the miners still give Scargill such strong support. One is wholly rational though the other does lie in that region of belief which makes John Lloyd so embarrassed. First, the miners are engaged in a long-drawn out struggle with a management which is, literally, set upon breaking the union. In the course of that struggle, the miners are behaving quite rationally; the stroppiest workforces tend to be in the lowest cost pits headed by Selby — the pit that simply cannot be closed. Lloyd may be right that the miners will not take effective national action. But the evidence is that they are quite ready to take literally dozens of localised stoppages. Certainly, it is in many ways a struggle from weakness but it is far from clear that it is irrational.

In such a context, I think it is quite rational to doubt the usefulness of a man like Walsh who is able to say on television that British Coal have ceased any substantial closure programme. He is quite simply either lying or a fool.

Second, and this is the embarrassing part, Scargill keeps the faith. I, personally, find his version of the faith more than a little potty and have done so for many years. But there are a lot more than the manual working class in forgotten northern communities ready to offer respect for commitment to long-term principles. Perhaps you should stop writing for a while, John, and go back to your original craft: listening.

1968 supplement

Copies of our 1968 supplement (published Christmas 1987) are available at 75p for individual copies and 50p each for bulk orders (20 or more). Orders with remittance to *NS* office. Please mark envelope "1968 supplement".

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LECTURES

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: The John Coffin Memorial Lecture will be given by Professor Marilyn Butler (King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at Cambridge University) entitled: 'Byron and the Empire in the East' at the University of London, Beveridge Hall, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU at 5.30 pm on Thursday 4 February, 1988. Admission free, without ticket. W3.8

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PERSONAL

GROSVENOR SQUARE '88. Were you there? We'd like to hear from you for a reunion. Please reply to Box (02)0803. W3.7

AGENDA

Deadline: 2pm Mondays

THE COGERS, founded 1775, discuss/debate the "Events of the Week" every Saturday 8pm at the "Albion", Ludgate Circus, EC4. All welcome.

WED 20 JAN

TRADE UNIONS AND THE LAW. Talk by David Bean. 7.30pm in Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, SW1. All welcome. Central London Fabian Society.

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Weekend competition

No 3008 **Set by Tim Hopkins**

Could we have some apt anagrams of the names of national newspapers and/or magazines? Max. five anagrams per entrant, by 27 January please.

No 3005 **Set by Margaret Rogers**

Portraits of the typical *NS* reader.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**

I cannot imagine why it should be, but nothing makes you more excited than writing about yourselves. Before I get on to that, however, here's news from the Competition Archivist: ideologically quite unsound, it's a rundown of WHO WON MOST in 1987. Equal first, you'll gasp to learn, were Basil Ransome-Davies and Noel Petty. Third was Will Bellenger, fourth Alison Prince, fifth Gerard Benson, sixth Peter Norman, seventh Katie Mallett, eighth Nicholas Murray, ninth Stanley J. Sharpless, tenth D.A. Prince.

Wouldn't it be nice if, next year, there could be a few *new* names on the list (Katie Mallett is the only person not to have been there in 1986). It's simply a question of not allowing yourselves to be frightened by the oldies. Speaking of which, your Typical *NS* Readers were dripping in nostalgia — for Kingsley Martin, for Beveridge, even for the *Daily Herald* — but so surprisingly passable were they that I've decided to forgive you. What's more, while each winner gets twelve pounds, Gavin J.S. Ross, exceptionally, gets fifteen.

I am the very model of a modern *NS* reader;
I go backwards from "This England" and I seldom
make the leader.
I linger with the lonelyhearts both radical and fortyish
And learn of films in London that are relevant and
naughtyish.
The books reviewed embarrass me in face of my far
gaucher list,
While all the correspondents seem to say I'm not a
socialist.
I'm sure our secret services are all an utter shambles
But I haven't really time for four-page articles of
Campbell's,
So I hurry through the commentary, making sure I've
read it, as
We always get a questionnaire each time they change
the Editors.
I sometimes try the Comp, but I'm a very rare
succeeder,
In short, the very model of a modern *NS* reader!

GAVIN J. S. ROSS

The *Statesperson* reader is, of course, non-sexist, non-racist and liberally neutral to the point of catalepsy; so, in what follows, for "he" read "she", "it", etc.

Despite experience, he is an optimist of Panglossian proportions, expecting to receive his *NS* punctually each Friday and believing in an editorial continuity of humane socialism, astute analysis and sophisticated criticism. He expects to be kept up to the minute in ideas, jargon, mores, personality trends and even fashions, although his own world view is firmly anchored in the 1930s. He peers sadly backwards through the Great Turnstile to the shades of Pritchett, Kingsley Martin, Allan M. Laing . . . He still hopes against hope, with Roger Woddis and Duncan Campbell, that, ultimately, perseverance works.

ERIC SWAINSON

Nowadays, a confused person. The old sign-system — duffel coat, desert boots, coffee and chess at the Prompt Corner — has disintegrated. Without a secure replacement, the *NS*-person has become a "fractured subject", struck by identity crises as often as the review changes editors. One enjoys wine, but should it really be such a prominent topic? Psephology has come and gone: who's the wiser? As for Judith Williamson . . . at least John Coleman could be counted on not to be *clever*.

It's all a bit like Billy Bragg's music. One wants to show goodwill, yet after all the old tunes *were* the best. Can it be that one is getting old? No longer even "typical" as society divides into ever more intricately segmented age, class and gender factions? And all those damn questionnaires . . . heavy, man.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

He's in Social Studies,
She's at a nursery school,
They're sexually broad-minded,
But faithful, as a rule.

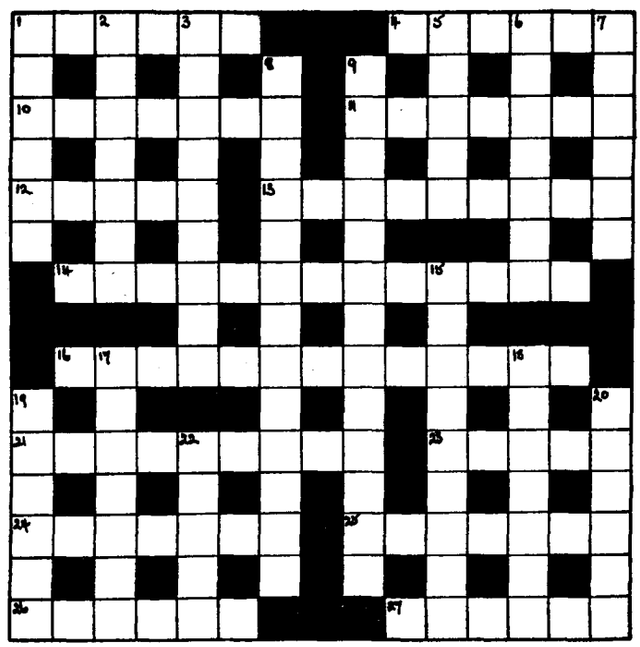
He reads the *Independent*,
She is a *Guardian* fan,
They've 2.7 children,
A Swiss *au pair*, and Gran.

At the last election
They voted SDP,
But will go back to Labour
In '92 (DV).

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Weekend Crossword 1582

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1582, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 25 January.



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ACROSS

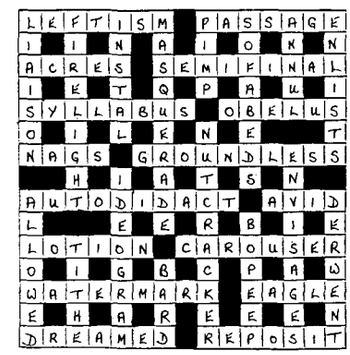
1. There is nothing in slang being adapted as a catch-phrase (6)
4. In form when the old man is put back in store (6)
10. One master may appear instead of others (7)
11. Weight in a prize encounter? (7)
12. Refuse to cut an inch off a bird (5)
13. Beliefs about people making dwellings (9)
14. A nose broken by insects when a game is played (7,6)
16. Woos a poet when soldiers get into trouble (13)
21. Setsquare, for example, makes my number expected back after a final note (9)
23. Contract to satisfy penniless (5)
24. Disentangle the middle of a melody by a foreign composer (7)
25. Performs with relatives in animal covering (7)
26. Man who attaches a stone to a bird (6)
27. Bird which makes a sound like a seal (6)

DOWN

1. Count it an honour to be a tree (6)
2. Outdoor address to writer before broadcasting (7)
3. Craftier one turns into a skilful one (9)
5. Make plant refuse to pull large number (5)
6. People in the workplace love something hot (7)
7. Hate being in a side test-match players are chosen from (6)
8. Strides about one at a time unfortunately (13)
9. A lot of sailors show that bridge exists to injure a girl (7,6)
15. Weapons produce misfortune in thin red line (9)
17. Went too far so the ring-leaders are about to go wrong (7)
18. Bennett is about to enquire for a North American (7)
19. Smart tree (6)
20. River where you have to know fishing gear (6)
22. Resorts for rich man (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1581



Prizewinners to 1581

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Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum' and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Typesetting by Tocatta Graphics, Tabard House, London SE1
Printed by BPCC Colchester Web Offset Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LJ (Tel. 577881), a member company of BPCC Printing Corporation plc.
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ.

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OUR PRESIDENT? SHORT, STOCKY, GREASY GUY?!
THAT'S RIGHT, WHY?
SNIFF THERE GOES MY PROMOTION...
©CHRISTIAN

Chess

LONG BEFORE the new year I made a resolution that one day I would find space for a proper tribute to the achievement of the British team in the IXth Olympiad for correspondence play (1982-7). Jonathan Penrose, Adrian Hollis, Simon Webb, John Footner, John Toothill and Chris Shephard, the members of that victorious team, would be justified in feeling that their gold medals, earned through more than four years of analytical work, deserve at least a fraction of the kudos that the English over-the-board team gained for their Olympiad silver medals. Indeed, given the irrational factors (time-trouble, nerves, individual psychology) which so often influence decisive OTB results, why don't we think of correspondence chess as the superior genre?

Somehow OTB (I don't much like the acronym, or the phrase: perhaps 'face-to-face' or 'direct' chess?) always seems like the real thing, if only because it retains the allegiance of the strongest players. The pace of the postal version makes it perfectly suited to the back-burner, with no shortage of other events to push it there. A monumental series of world championship matches has only just finished. But in St John, Canada next week the contenders for the role of challenger in 1990 will be squaring off against each other.

The pairings for the seven first round candidates' matches are:

Sokolov (USSR) v Spraggett (Canada)
Yusupov (USSR) v Ehlvest (USSR)
Korchnoi (Switzerland) v Hjartarson (Iceland)
Short (England) v Sax (Hungary)
Timman (NLD) v Salov (USSR)
Portisch (Hungary) v Vaganian (USSR)
Seirawan (USA) v Speelman (England)

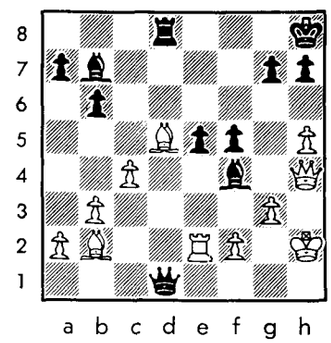
The one case in which an appreciable disparity in strength might be suspected is the first match, since Spraggett only appears by grace of the free berth given to the host nation. The other contests are all finely balanced. As the matches are of but 6 games' duration, a decidedly short course at this level, there is a danger that enterprise will be inhibited by wariness of an irretrievable defeat.

Perhaps the most intriguing clashes are those in which experience faces the new brigade — above all, Korchnoi versus the young Icelander. Johann Hjartarson was the revelation of 1987. Iceland could certainly boast a crop of strong young players (also H. Olafsson, Arnason and Petursson), but none of them were ranked in this class. Not until the Szirak interzonal, at least, where Hjartarson and Salov both played magnificently to tie for first place.

KORCHNOI, who will be 57 in March, is a contemporary of Geller, Petrosian and Tal. He must have been described as a veteran before Hjartarson learnt the moves. He took such a mauling from Karpov in the Merano match of 1981 that it was feared that his famous competitive spirit might be broken for good. Yet in 1987 he appeared as indomitable as ever — in fact, I would be tempted to spurn the other Ks and vote him Player of the Year on the grounds of his creative energy and savage will to win. The game he won off Salov at Belgrade is a wonderful display of these attributes, but unfortunately too rich and complex to squeeze in. Instead, the diagram introduces another passage of play from that tournament.

The continuation does not show **Hjartarson** *(White)* at his best, but it is an interesting combination to analyse. It was also, being from the last round, important to the outcome of the event. By winning **Ljubojevic** *(Black)* secured undivided first prize, to the delight of the Yugoslav chess fans who have suffered something of a recession since the palmy days of Gligoric, Ivkov, Matanovic and Matulovic.

31 . . . Bxg3+ Very clever. But as it should lead to a draw, is there anything better? In fact the alternative sacrifice 31 . . . Rxd5 32. cxd5 Qxd5 33. f3 h6 34. gxf4 Qxf3 35. Rf2 Qh1+ etc seems a fairly routine draw. So we should applaud Ljubo's choice. **32. Kxg3 Rxd5 33. cxd5 Qxd5 34. Qb4 Qf3+ 35. Kh4 h6** The most pleasing feature of Black's play is the way he finds time for quiet moves, even when a Rook down. While stopping Qf8 mate he threatens 36 . . . Qh1+ 37. Kg3 Qg2+ 38. Kh4 Qh2 mate. **36. Re3?** White ought to forget about the Rook and follow the example of striking terror in a long diagonal with 36. Bxe5. According to Andric in the *British Chess Magazine* the post-mortem then revealed this variation: 36 . . . Qh1+ 37. Kg3 Qg1+ 38. Kh4 Qg5+ 39. Kh3 Qxh5+ 40. Qh4 Qf3+ 41. Qg3 Qh1+ 42. Qh2, and as 42 . . . Qf1+ fails to 43. Kg3 and the threat of Qxh6+ Black has to settle for perpetual. **Qxf2+ 37. Rg3 Qh2+ 38. Rh3 Qf2+ 39. Rg3 Kh7!** The quiet, but deadly decider. **40. Kh3 Qf1+ 41. Kh4 Qh1+ 42. Rh3 Qg1 43. Rg3 Qh2+ 44. Rh3 Qxb2 45. Qc3 Qf2+ 0-1.** Black is ahead on material now, but it's mate in 2 anyway.



George Botterill

This England

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☐ A ghost which has been draining unemployment benefits at a North Sea port has been exorcised at the request of the DHSS. The vicar of Bridlington sprinkled holy water over a trawler after its crew blamed a poltergeist for repeatedly keeping them away from work. — *Guardian* (James Scott)

☐ Curry's, the electrical group, was fined yesterday for misleading the public into thinking products were made in Japan. Oxford magistrates decided that the company had acted illegally by giving goods made in Britain, Italy, Yugoslavia and South Korea the name Matsui with a symbol resembling the rising sun. — *The Times* (Brian Taylor)

☐ Scrapmetal merchant Gordon "Steptoe" Passey, of Greenham Common, Berks, has told President Ronald Reagan he would like to buy the 96 cruise missiles banned under the new arms treaty. — *Daily Mirror* (George Moor)

☐ A campaign to introduce condom machines in Conservative clubs is the latest stage in the battle against aids. But clubs in North Yorkshire say they don't need the service because their members are mostly too old and "past it" to make the machines worthwhile. Jim Fischer, secretary of York central Conservative club, said "Most of them have forgotten all about such things and are too old to care. If the Labour Party needs so many I can only guess that they must be more virile than us." — *York Star* (John Morrison)

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Tel: 01-739 3211 (Editorial & Administration)
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London E2/Fax 01-739 9307
© 1988 Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd & contributors
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd
Distributed by NS Distribution

Editor: Stuart Weir; **Deputy Editor:** John Rentoul; **Books & Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Writers:** Sarah Benton, Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Jolyon Jenkins; **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Art Editor:** Vicky Hutchings; **Sub-editor:** Susan Ardill; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork will only be returned if an SAE is enclosed.

Subscription rates: UK & Eire £40; Europe (air mail only £46); rest of world: air speeded £51; air mail £61. USA: air speeded $70; air mail $85. Canada: air speeded Can $90; air mail Can $115.

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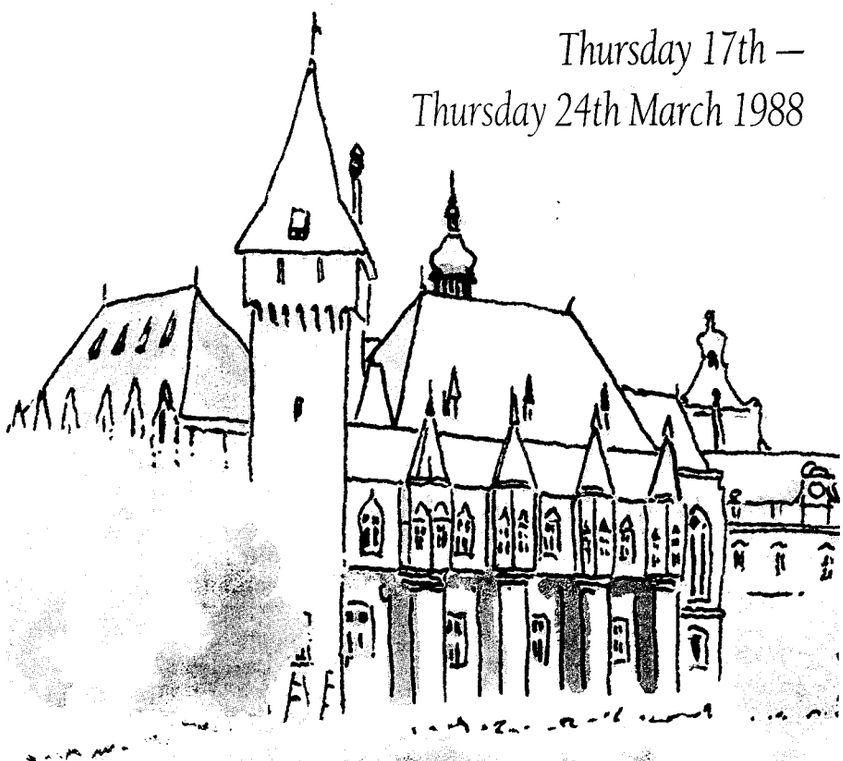

The gracious city of Budapest stands on the banks of the meandering River Danube, the two sides linked by eight majestic bridges. The foreign influences that have shaped Hungary are shown in the many architectural styles of her great buildings; from austere gothic, stately renaissance and the barely-restrained oriental decoration to the effervescence of the baroque on her liberation from the invaders. The Festival takes place in many lovely buildings and carries on the Hungarian heritage of music from the well-known Esterhazy patronage of Haydn to works by Bartok, Kodaly and Liszt, and concerts given by world-famous performers.

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